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REMARKS

BY

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OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

DURING

THE

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
*"BREAK BARRIERS, OPEN DOORS: FOR AN INCLUSIVE
SOCIETY AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL"*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2013
UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

Thank you very much, and a very good morning to everybody.

Let me first of all say a big thank you to those who invited me here today and recognize of course, my colleague, the Ambassador of Japan and the Assistant Secretary-General Thomas Gass of DESA. We appreciate the statement delivered on behalf of the Secretary-General. I also like to appreciate the comments from the Representatives of Spain and the Philippines and appreciate even more their continued work and the work that they did during the high-level in getting us to where we are today.

I would like to speak very briefly. What I have is a message of solidarity. I will deliver my message as the President of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) first, and then I would also like to say a couple of words as the co-Chair of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

As the President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, I have always said this, and those who have worked with me know that I am a believer, that it does not matter whether we are talking about people living with disabilities or any other people who have, for different reasons, been excluded from the mainstream of development. We have to find ways to ensure that the challenge of inclusivity becomes a thing of the past, and if we set ourselves to overcome these kinds of challenges and we mobilize the global community through the Conference of States Parties through the United Nations, through the civil society, and through various media as we saw in the video clip aired here a little earlier, I am more than convinced that the challenge that faces us in trying to embrace the over one billion people who are living with disabilities is not an insurmountable challenge. It is a challenge that we can bring to bear on the world's development in a way in which it would be not just transformative to the world, but transformative to the lives of people who are living with disabilities. This is really what we should be aiming for.

It is my continued commitment as the President of the Conference on

States Parties to the CRPD to try and achieve that particular goal. This is what I aspire to, this is what I work for, and I will continue to collaborate with all those who will collaborate with me to ensure that we are able to get to where we want to get to, in that regard.

Secondly, as the co-Chair of the Open Working Group, we have a massive challenge ahead of us. The reason I was late earlier today was because I was at the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of Sustainable Development Financing. This is the Expert Group that will be looking at how the challenges that we face with regard to sustainable development goals, and with regard to the post-2015 development agenda will be financed, taking into account that the goals and the agenda itself will be universal and the agenda is set to be one of the most transformative international agendas that the international community has ever really had. So, it is a huge task and it is a huge challenge and the financing aspects of it are very real, in moving forward.

One of the challenges that we are going to face, and I think those who have heard me speak before would have heard me say this: it is about how we address the challenge of embracing and reaching out to those groups that have been excluded, and as it were drawing in, groups, large groups of people such as the persons with disabilities. The question is: *how do we do this in the context of a transformative agenda for the 21st century?* We need ideas from around the table and further afield as to how this needs to be done. A lot of people think that all this will be reduced to a set of goals. There will be no sustainable development goal *per se*, for persons with disabilities. It would be not only undesirable and I think it would not really respond to the needs of people with disabilities.

I think the real challenge will be to try to ensure that we come up with targets that cut across all the sustainable development goals that speak to the challenges and to the need for inclusion of persons with disabilities. But how we do that will pre-suppose that your voices, the voices of those with disabilities and those who champion the rights of persons with disabilities are heard, are articulated in a manner that can be taken up by the Open-Working Group and that

can be integrated ultimately into the Post-2015 development agenda.

My commitment, of course, is to ensure that I play my supportive role to make sure that happens. What would be most desirable for me of course, is that we get beyond slogans and a lot of kind words, and we get to the real nuts and bolts of delivering on the needs of persons with disabilities. Because, as you know, in the international community, I do not want to sound facetious but words may not amount to much. The challenge is how to move from words to action and how we can truly do this in a manner that is not only inclusive but that recognizes that nothing can be done without the very beneficiaries of what it is that we aspire to do, being fully involved, and fully integrated in addressing that challenge.

Thank you very much for having me here. It has been my pleasure, and I will continue to remain faithful to the commitment and to play my role in promoting these issues as we move forward.

Thank you.