**Message from**

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**Permanent Representative of the Philippines**

**Read/delivered by**

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**2013 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

*Theme:*  "**Break barriers, open doors: for an inclusive society for all**"

*3 December 2013, 9:50 a.m.*

*Conference Room 6, NLB*

**Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good morning.

It has become a welcome tradition for the Philippines to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities at the UN Headquarters with DESA and other stakeholders. Each year, we have a different theme, well thought out months before December rolls in. This year’s celebration is a very special one coming as it does barely three months after the General Assembly held the High Level Meeting on Disability and Development entitled *the Way Forward: A Disability Inclusive Development Agenda Towards 2015 and beyond.*

It may be recalled that it was the first time in the history of the UN that the General Assembly held a High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development. Holding the meeting was therefore already a significant achievement in itself. More importantly, however, the meeting provided us with a historic opportunity to create change. It heightened awareness and brought the much needed visibility to strengthen efforts in ensuring accessibility for and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development efforts. With the adoption by world leaders of the outcome document, it also helped us decide on the way forward to achieve our goal of full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

The outcome document adopted is actually a very short document consisting of just ten paragraphs. It, however, gives concrete recommendations for Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities and provides for the follow up process to ensure that Member States and stakeholders stay engaged to achieve the Realization of the Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities beyond 2015. The document serves as an important and useful reference for all stakeholders in ensuring that deliberations for the post 2015 development framework fully take into account the elements contained therein. In a nutshell, it tells us that as we mold our collective vision for a post 2015 development agenda, it is important that we give special focus to an inclusive and people centered approach.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We cannot overemphasize enough the importance of ensuring accessibility for and inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development. Persons with disabilities should be never be viewed as mere beneficiaries of development. Given the right opportunity and fair chance, they can greatly enhance and contribute to the growth of their communities and society. We all need to do our share, however, to provide the enabling environment in order to enhance the capabilities of all individuals and groups, including persons with disabilities, to participate fully in all aspects of society and to exercise greater choice and control over their own well-being. It is only through active participation that people are able to influence decisions which later determine the functioning and well-being of their communities and societies.

We have undoubtedly much work to do ahead of us. We need to ensure equal access of all to education, employment, technology and public spaces, among others. The adoption of the outcome document of the High Level Meeting is but the start of our journey. But with steadfast dedication and commitment, we certainly can break barriers and open doors - and one day realize a more open and inclusive society where everyone can effectively participate and reach their full potential.

Thank you.