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**“Message of Inclusion “**

**By H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Khaled Khiari**

**During the Commemorative event of the**

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

**(New York, December 3rd, 2013)**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished and Honored Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentleman,**

It gives me great pleasure to be among this august Assembly. Tunisia is, really, honored to participate in this commemorative event dedicated to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to thank DESA, the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN and Leonard Cheshire Disability for organizing this event.

Our meeting provides a good and special opportunity to reaffirm our global commitment to building an enabling and inclusive environment so that all persons with disabilities are able to enjoy their rights and realize their full potential in society.

We firmly believe that addressing all economic and social needs of people living with disabilities is fundamental to achieving an inclusive and balanced society.

Latest statistics suggest that an estimated 15% of world population is disabled and 80% of these over 1 billion people live in the developing world ; a challenging situation actually in an era marked by multifaceted global crises.

However, we believe that this group can make a significant contribution to development and in return development could be an enhancing factor for their inclusion. That’s why, it is imperative that we dismantle existing barriers and empower persons with disabilities. We need to help them to gain equitable access to opportunities to participate and contribute to their communities. By giving them a fair chance to be heard and to participate in building their own societies, we are breaking barriers and opening doors to them to say their words.

Therefore, I would like to reiterate my country’s commitment to dismantle the few remaining obstacles to eliminate entirely discrimination and build up an inclusive society. We are fully aware that this objective does not rest entirely upon the government but is also the responsibility of a large section of the society which would embrace the goal to achieve an inclusive development and society. A society for all. A society where each and every one has a role to play. Tunisia strongly believes that to reach such a noble goal, we need to build a common vision of the post 2015 development agenda with special focus on a human rights-based approach to development. Within this spirit, Tunisia has hosted the Arab Regional Consultation on Disability and Development in May 2013. A collective awareness is emerging in our region which signals better days for this issue.

**Excellencies,**

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**Ladies and Gentleman,**

Tunisia is determined, today, to move forward with the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Within the context of the democratic transformations which the country is experiencing and the hopes arising from the Tunisian revolution, the Government endeavors to develop further the legal provisions to eliminate all forms of discrimination and to guarantee the full inclusion of vulnerable and excluded groups, not least persons with disabilities. Furthermore, Tunisia is working to develop educational programs to change ways of thinking and bring the disabled up to the level of the able-bodied by giving them opportunities to develop their capacities.

Time has now come to ensure that international community’s commitment for a disability inclusive development has to be translated into concrete action. We still have much work to do in this regard. So let’s unite together for this noble cause to provide equal chance and opportunities to all without any kind of discrimination or marginalization. Through strong and global partnerships and our common dedication, we can make a difference for a disability-inclusive development and society.

This is our message of inclusion.

**Thank you**