Statement on behalf of Disabled People’s International (DPI) at the First Meeting of the Global Network on Monitoring & Evaluation for Disability-inclusive Development, October 6-7 2015

Delivered by dorodi Sharma

Good afternoon ladies & gentlemen.

It is my privilege to be presenting the statement on behalf of the members of Disabled People’s International spanning across 150 countries in 7 regions of the world. We thank UNDESA and its leadership for its continued support to disability rights and inclusion. We are extremely honoured to be a part of the Global Network on Monitoring & Evaluation for Disability Inclusive Development.

Ladies & gentlemen, DPI is a grassroots organisation and majority of our members are from the Global South. And today as I speak to you, I do so to bring to this table the particular concerns of this 800 million people with disabilities. While, we are delighted at the several mentions of disability in the Sustainable Development Goals, it would be a gross injustice to the cause we espouse if we believe that this has been adequate. Nevertheless, it is a beginning and it is now upto the leadership of the disability movement to ensure that the gap between disability and development is effectively bridged.

When we talk about monitoring and evaluation, the first thing that comes to mind is information and data. DPI differentiates between these two key concepts for a particular reason. Data are the facts that we collect but it has no meaning whatsoever if it does not translate into information for people with disabilities on the ground. I can give a personal example from my work in India. In the campaign toward enumeration of people with disabilities in the Census of 2011, the disability community rejected the Washington Group question and instead chose to go with a question that was based on the medical model. This was not because they were ignorant about CRPD but because they were neither involved nor informed about the Washington Group’s work. When we presented the Washington Group question to them as an option, they felt it did not suit the Indian sensitivities.

I present this example to highlight the need to focus on the human element of disability inclusive development, especially its monitoring and evaluation. The tools developed in New York and Geneva must be transferred to the local leaders. Most importantly, these tools have to find acceptability among them.

Having said that, it is not that there are no best practices away from Europe, North America and other industrialized countries. DPI has partnered with G3ict to conduct an annual survey on ICT policies and progress report. My colleague from G3ict will talk more about it. Similarly, we have partnered with The Zero Project to conduct surveys as part of their annual report on best practices and policies. These efforts have created a compendium of best practices and reference points for disability inclusive development. DPI’s unique reach and membership base makes it an unparalleled conduit for information from New York, Geneva and other policy making centres to the grassroots where implementation takes place. We would be more than happy to utilize our extensive membership network of DPOs for any data collection required for this Global Network.

I also take this opportunity to share with you that the 9th World Assembly of DPI will be held in Delhi, India from April 11-13 2016. The theme of this World Assembly is ‘Building Human Capital: Realizing SDGs for People with Disabilities’. The objective is to address the question that grassroots leaders have been asking us: “What does the SDGs mean to us?”; “Okay, we understand the SDGs but how do we ensure that our governments at the federal, provincial, and local level are fulfilling their obligation towards people with disabilities?”

All this while, the enabled disability leadership with access to resources and information have focused on the ‘supply side’ of disability inclusive development. But DPI strongly believes that we must focus on the ‘demand side’. The extent of inclusion in development programs, or for that matter collecting disability segregated data will depend on how we equip our leaders to ask the right questions of their governments, and give them the tools to engage with their institutions delivering public services. To do so, we must ensure that people with disabilities from the grassroots are being supported to become intrinsic part of networks such as this. DPI reiterates that the focus must be on localized solutions. This is something even the SDGs have acknowledged, especially when it comes to indicators. As the national priorities of a country will determine how it collects its SDG data, so should the disability movement be empowered to adapt its focus based on local priorities. Thus, the success of disability inclusive development will boil down to the level of demand exhibited by the local leaders.

Thank you once again for this opportunity.