

Panel discussion on the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda in the light of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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STATEMENT

BY

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Thank you chair, for the kind introduction. My name is Nagase and I am so honored to be here as a member of this very important panel. Yes, I have been working on research and advocacy on disability for many years, almost 40 years. For those who cannot see me, during the journey I have lost much hair. And in fact it is my birthday today.

As our Special Rapporteur has pointed out, there has been much progress in including disability in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, based on the awareness that inclusion of disability in the overall development process leads to the achievement of SDGs in general. I am happy that a number of global indicators on disability are under consideration now.

Yes, we have come a long way. When I look back at our failure to include disability specifically in the MDGs at the end of the last century, it is amazing that we have reached here with regard to the SDGs.

As we all know, disability has been mainly promoted within the social development at the UN. I was a JPO with the focal point on disability within the secretariat, today's DESA, during the negotiations of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities, in Vienna. This Commission for Social Development played the major role in elaborating the Standard Rules. Of course, the Standard Rules was born out of the 1989 Swedish initiative for the CRPD, following the ground-breaking 1987 Italian proposal.

I have witnessed the shifting priorities. Among the three priorities of the 1982 World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, namely, prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities, the last social dimension continued to prevail and led to the Standard Rules.

That is why the reference to the prevention of “behavioural, developmental and neurological disorders” in paragraph 26 of the Agenda 2030 is disturbing in light of the CRPD, which is the solid human rights convention building on historic developments reflecting the evolving thinking about disability, though I do not doubt the good intentions of this paragraph. I fully agree with the importance of health. I just wish to say that health services should always ensure the best possible health for everyone, not be seen as trying to prevent certain types of people from being born.

The Standard Rules, which, in addition to the Special Rapporteur, established the panel of experts consisting of DPOs. This led to the formation of the International Disability Alliance in 1999. The Standard Rules process was certainly promoted by “nothing about us without us” principle but in turn the Standard Rules also promoted this vital principle.

“Nothing about us without us” means self-advocacy for persons with intellectual disabilities, an area which I am most familiar with, in my position as the Asia Pacific Representative of Inclusion International,

Related to self-advocacy of persons with intellectual disabilities, I am very happy that my former colleague on the council of Inclusion International, Robert Martin from New Zealand, is a candidate for the CRPD Committee this year. His election as the first Committee member with an intellectual disability will send a right message beyond the CRPD Committee. In this connection, I hasten to add that the candidate from Japan to the CRPD Committee, Prof. Jun Ishikawa, and I have been working closely.

Inclusion International and I have been very fortunate to promote self-advocacy of persons with intellectual disabilities in Southeast Asia working with Asia Pacific Development Center on Disability (APCD), which started as a joint project of governments of Thailand and Japan through JICA. APCD succeeded in starting first self-advocacy groups of persons with intellectual disabilities in Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR. When the project began in 2007, I vividly

remember that members were very shy and did not speak up. But now some leaders are so confident and vocal.

This development project was made possible because of the Asia Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, started in 1993, as the joint initiative of both China and Japan.

The Asia Pacific Decade was the regional follow-up to the Global Decade from 1983, proclaimed to implement the WPA, which was progressive at that time of history, emphasizing the “participation of disabled persons in decision-making” and encouraging the self-advocacy of persons with intellectual disabilities as part of the equalization of opportunities.

This idea of the WPA came true only after a quarter of a century in some Asian countries because of the Asia Pacific Decade, whose current focus is the Incheon Strategy to make the right real. This Incheon Strategy has been our regional contribution to include disability in the SDGs.

Obviously the Asia Pacific Decade and Incheon Strategy process can contribute to the mainstreaming of disability and realizing SDGs in line with the CRPD. This should be an essential component of the mid-term review of the Incheon Strategy next year. This example might offer some suggestions for similar initiatives in other regions.

The WPA and the Standard Rules were the necessary foundations of the CRPD. But now the CRPD has replaced the WPA and the Standard Rules, both of which have played their critical roles.

We have been more successful with the new development agenda certainly because of the CRPD. Without the CRPD, promotion of disability within development would have been much more challenging. But without the ground-work in social development, perhaps we may not have the CRPD even today. We also remember that the 2001 Mexican initiative of the CRPD was against poverty and social exclusion, in the context of development.

When the mandate of the Special Rapporteur was finished at the end of 2014, this Commission looked a bit like an “empty nest”, if I may say so. But this Commission needs to continue to make the difference by taking initiatives. I remember the

successful organization of the High Level Meeting on Disability and Development and its Outcome document in 2013 which of course led to more disability inclusion in the SDGs. I am very much aware of the annual DESA Forum, meeting in conjunction with the Conference of States Parties of the CRPD, which has been very productive. Perhaps these existing practices give us guidance for the future work of this important Commission. I welcome the very interesting IDA proposal about the regular annual multi-stakeholder panel, which can make important contributions to the High Level Political Forum.

I conclude by emphasizing that the inclusion of diversity means a better world for all. When communities provide physical and information access for persons with disabilities, everyone is better prepared for disasters. We should learn from the tragic double fatality rate for persons with disabilities when the major earthquake and tsunami hit Japan five years ago. Schools are better when they are designed to take into account a variety of different learning styles, and having children grown up and learn together enhances social cohesion and integration, one of the major themes of the World Summit for Social Development.

Thank you very much for this precious opportunity today. I feel very much excited about the next 15 fifteen years to work on both the Agenda 2030 and the CRPD though I will certainly retire by then. I look forward to exchanging our views.

Thank you.