Statement by Ambassador Chull-joo Park
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea
2018 International Day of Persons with Disabilities:
“Empowering Persons with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality”

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank UN DESA for organizing this event. It is my pleasure to take part in this annual celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which is a meaningful opportunity to renew our commitment towards inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all. I would like to commend UN DESA particularly this year for launching the first-ever flagship report on disability and development. Its extensive findings, data, and good practices will provide us with a great reference for building disability-inclusive policies and programs.

Entering the fourth year of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the second decade of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Government of the Republic of Korea remains committed to ensuring independent living and full participation of the persons with disabilities.
First, the government of the Republic of Korea has been developing and implementing the five-year Comprehensive Policy Plan on Persons with Disabilities since 1998. With the goal of realizing an inclusive society that empower persons with disabilities, the plan has focused on developing tailored policies and programs in key social functions, mainstreaming disability in all government work, and building a systematic inter-agency framework. This year the Korean government launched the 5th plan (2018-2022) in close cooperation with civil society and academia.

Second, the Republic of Korea has introduced and implemented 14 disability-specific law and various disability-inclusive legislations to enhance access of persons with disabilities and raise societal awareness. Most recently, the Act on Guarantee of Right to Health and Access to Medical Services for Persons with Disabilities went into effect to ensure that persons with disabilities access health service on an equal basis in all parts of the country.

Last but not least, the Republic of Korea has been an active supporter for a more inclusive and accessible United Nations. While serving as the President of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD, we
tabled the resolution entitled “Towards the Full Realization of an Inclusive and Accessible United Nations for Persons with Disabilities” together with partners in the 70th session of the GA. It was followed by the Secretary-General’s comprehensive report on accessibility for persons with disabilities at the UN. The Korean government also contributed in operating the Accessibility Centre at the UN in 2013. In this regard, it is truly an honor for me to serve as one of the co-chairs of the Steering Committee on Accessibility, which was launched last week under the leadership of the President of the 73rd General Assembly.

Our initiative of Steering Committee has a special meaning in a sense that it is a Member State-driven initiative for improving accessibility of the persons with disabilities. I’m sure that this Committee will build on the existing initiatives by the UN Secretariat and Joint Inspection Unit, not only to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to accessibility, but also to work out a feasible multi-year plan for enhancing accessibility at the UN premises, conferences and services. We look forward to in-depth collaboration and partnership with the UN and various stakeholders to make a difference.
Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to close my remarks by underscoring the importance of realizing the full potential of persons with disabilities. There are over 1 billion people who live with disabilities, which is 15 percent of the world’s population. It is society as whole that benefits most when persons with disabilities, the world’s largest minority, are fully empowered to participate in all aspects of life. In this regard, I would like to ask for your kind attention during the music performance this afternoon by Korean youths with developmental disabilities. I am sure the performance will showcase the fact that current barriers cannot stop dreams and hopes, encouraging us to work harder to create a future that truly leaves no one behind. I thank you. /End/