

Remarks for Assistant Secretary-General Elliott Harris at Opening

**International Day of Persons with Disabilities
3 December 2019, 10:00-11:30am, CR 4**

Excellencies,
Members of the Disability Community
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my role as Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2019 observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities under the theme *'Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership: taking action on the 2030 Development Agenda'*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Delivering on the 2030 Agenda's promise to 'leave no one behind', in alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is a matter of justice as well as an essential investment in our common future.

In advancing policies to fully realize the rights of persons with disabilities in society and development, we move our world closer to upholding the core values and principles of the United Nations and its engagement for peace and development over the past seven and a half decades.

The 2030 Agenda is of unprecedented scope and significance. It lays out a concrete plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, articulated in its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.. The Agenda applies to all countries, developed

and developing, in an equal manner, and makes clear that no one should be left behind.

Evidence, as collected in the UN Flagship Report on Disability and Development by our Department indicates that persons with disabilities suffer disproportionate levels of poverty; lack access to education, health services, and employment; and are under-represented of in decision-making and political participation.

The active and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, as agents of change, is a prerequisite for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. When persons with disabilities lead and participate, the whole world benefits and their voice is heard in different areas of life – be it in politics, business, sport, or culture. The abilities, talent and skills of persons with disabilities will lead the way in ensuring that their rights and perspectives are given the rightful place in the decision-making processes at the local, national and global levels.

The voice of persons with disabilities challenges prejudices and breaks down barriers of inequalities and prejudice. It serves to make societies more inclusive, accessible and sustainable.

As one international community - those of us who are present here as well as our colleagues and friends worldwide – we stand together today to highlight the contributions of persons with disabilities to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a reality for all people of all ages and abilities.

This past year, important initiatives have been launched by the international community to address the inclusion of persons with disabilities, their rights, well-being and perspectives. This year's IDPD events will take stock of this progress, discuss persistent challenges, and examine next steps that can be taken.

Today's IDPD observance is organized in three parts: the launch of the 2019 Observance, which will be followed by a formal opening, and a panel discussion on new initiatives for disability inclusion in the global agenda. In the afternoon, also in

this room, there will be a spotlight event of Sport for all for Development and Peace.

Let us now proceed to the launch of the Observance by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and his representative, and the representative of civil society.

[End of remarks. Please see Scenario for introduction of next segment.]