

Observance of the 2019 International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Guests:

- It is a great honour and pleasure to participate in the opening of this Commemoration Event of the 2019 International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year dedicated to Promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership: taking action on the 2020 Agenda.
- Qatar has for a long time been committed to challenge stigma and inequity by seeking the inclusion of persons with disabilities in our development. We've aggressively, and compassionately, worked to improve the rights of persons with disability, especially in the areas of health, transportation and access to public facilities, employment, human rights, and education.
- For instance, Qatari law prohibits discrimination against persons with disability. Our laws require that 2% of all jobs in government agencies and public institutions be set aside for disabled persons. Private businesses employing a minimum of 25 staff are also required to hire persons with disabilities.
- We are one of the few countries to have a **Career Day for Persons with Disabilities**, which is an initiative to support the recruitment of Qatari citizens and residents to help them better integrate into Qatari society and achieve a better standard of living.
- We believe employment is extremely important. For people with disabilities, employment and meaningful work contributes to self-esteem, well being and inclusion within the community. This is crucial if we are to fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Development of leaving on one behind.

- Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen:
- Let me tell you that it is crucial we look at persons with disabilities positively and look into their contribution into society. For instance, as we look towards the 2022 FIFA World Cup, we are focusing on the fact that persons with disabilities are customers, have income and they need to feel welcome, valued and taken care of. When a business is inaccessible it is not only turning away one person, but all the people they might bring with them as well.
- Recently, the Hamad International Airport has entered into a partnership with 'Shafallah Center', one of Qatar Foundation for Social Work's (QFSW) affiliated centers, to provide additional services to passengers with special needs. The lounge features certain aspects of a sensory room, which is a specially designed space used for the therapy for children with limited communication skills, including electronic carpets, which allow children to play games and activities.
- Shafallah Center is also providing specialized training for ground handling staff at HIA on how to provide special care and assistance to passengers with special needs including those with autism.
- Qatar is also widely using ICTs. They can make a world of difference to those with disabilities, fostering greater equity and ensuring seamless integration into Qatari society. Our objective is that persons with disabilities should be empowered to access a range of services and opportunities online, including e-government services.
- For example, the portal of MADA, Qatar's Assistive Technology Center, offers people with disabilities, parents and professionals a wide range of information about Assistive Technology, in both Arabic and English. **The website is the first of its kind in the Arab world.**

- We are also extremely proud to have been at the forefront of efforts to establish a World Autism Awareness Day, which was first proposed by H.H. Sheikha Moza bint Nasser in the UN and was commemorated in 2008. In this regard, Qatar is the only country in the region and one of the few in the world, to have a National Autism Plan in place.
- A critical element behind Qatar's policy and programmatic efforts, is a strong political will and sustained commitment by our government. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge the guidance of His Highness the Emir of Qatar and the vision of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and SDG Advocate.
- Before I conclude my remarks, I am very pleased to inform you that Qatar, under the guidance and patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza, will on 7-8 December host the International Conference on Disability-inclusive development under the theme "Harnessing the Power of Sustainable Development Agenda to Advance the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities." We are delighted that the Deputy-Secretary General, Ms. Amina Mohammed, will attend and deliver the key note speech.
- The outcome of the conference will be a "Doha Declaration" that will form a core international reference point in advancing disability inclusion on the 2030 Agenda.
- I will stop here and wish you a very productive discussion.
- Thank you.