

3 December 2013

**Message of H.E. John W. Ashe
President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly,
on the International Day for Persons with Disabilities**

Over 1 billion persons throughout our world are disabled. On this International Day, the global community has come together to promote awareness and mobilize support for the inclusion, at all levels, of all persons with disabilities.

Disabled people make up the largest and most disadvantaged minority in the world --nearly 15 percent of the world's population. The majority of disabled persons across the globe are from developing countries. Many of them live in poverty, face discrimination, and are denied basic opportunities for growth.

On September 23 2013, under my leadership, the United Nations General Assembly convened the historic first-ever High-level Meeting on Disability and Development, and adopted a landmark outcome document aimed at creating a fully disabled-inclusive society as a part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

This year under the theme "Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all," the international community is calling for a global effort to make physical environments, transportation and information accessible to everyone and to change attitudes that fuel stigmatization and discrimination. What the global community needs now are tools for action and change, in order to realize an inclusive society where everyone's rights are protected and equal opportunities are supported.

I call on all Member States to move forward in this direction. The new landmark outcome document sets the vision beyond the Millennium Development Goals target date and underscores the need for disability-inclusive development strategies in the post-2015 setting. We must take aim at breaking down barriers and creating opportunities so that all human beings can live their lives to the fullest.