



Remarks

by

H.E. Ambassador John W. Ashe

President of the 68th session of the United Nations

General Assembly

New York

23 September 2013

**High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Realization of the
Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed
Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities**
Closing Plenary Meeting

Please check against delivery

Excellencies

Distinguish Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have come to the end of a very productive and thought-provoking High-level meeting of the General Assembly on Disability and Development, a meeting I believe will contribute to setting the stage for the post-2015 Development Agenda. Today's event represents a great step forward in the history of this Organization, and the level of attendance and participation is truly a testament to the United Nations' commitment to addressing disability inclusive development.

It is against this background that I would like to thank our distinguished co-chairs, H.E Minister Corazon Juliano Soliman, H.E Minister José Manuel Margallo, H.E Minister Heidi Hautala and H.E Excellency Dr. Khalil Zaouia, for their leadership in facilitating our discussions in the two interactive roundtables. Their summaries reflect frank and constructive engagement from all stakeholders including member states and civil society. I wish to also thank the Secretary-General for his commitment, as well as the Secretariat for their expertise and invaluable contribution to the success of this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years of planning brought us to this moment –the period in which Member States, members of the UN system, organizations of persons with disabilities and others shared their views and experiences for the way forward. The result is the outcome document, adopted this morning, towards the realization of MDGs and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

While we have made strides to eradicating obstacles and barriers towards a disability inclusive world, more needs to be done. We must remove barriers to physical environment, transportation, employment, education, health, services, information and assistive devices, such as those that rely on information and communications technologies. Accessibility is a goal and the means for inclusive development. Without it, no progress is possible.

Furthermore, we need to address the slow rate of progress, especially in regards to accessibility in our countries. Equally, the lack or slow pace of integrating disability in development agendas both at national and global levels must be our priority.

Excellencies,

As we leave this august Chamber and return to our respective countries, we should frankly examine what lies ahead. The outcome document provides a clear roadmap for the next phase - action to be taken by the international community for disability-inclusive society and development. Working together, we must do more to inject action on the ground in a meaningful manner.

We owe it our fellow persons with disabilities to provide real results. As the international community is in the process of shaping a post-2015 development agenda, we should remain undeterred in our resolve to achieve a disability inclusive agenda. Now more than ever – it is in our hands. Let’s also take forward what we have achieved today and bring it to the many events and debates we will hold during the 68th session as we narrow in on priorities, before negotiations begin on the new agenda.

On behalf of the President of the General Assembly, I look forward to working with you on the implementation of the outcome document of this High Level meeting. I thank you all for your participation and I now officially declare this meeting adjourned.

Thank you.