



**Remarks**

**by**

**H.E. John W. Ashe**

**President of the 68<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**

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**Inauguration of the United Nations Headquarters  
Accessibility Centre**

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Secretary-General,  
Under-Secretary-General for Public Information,  
Mr. Kang Seong Ju,  
Ms. Jenny Nilsson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

I am pleased to be here for today's inauguration of the UN Headquarters Accessibility Centre – an important and positive step in creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all within the UN family.

Let me begin by commending the Secretary-General for leading these efforts to make the UN Secretariat accessible for all and the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) for establishing this Centre. I also want to acknowledge the Government of the Republic of Korea for its generous support.

For far too long time and in far too many parts of the world, people with disabilities were treated as social outcasts, and in some cases this is sadly still the case. In 2006, the General Assembly adopted a landmark human rights instrument: the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 9 of the Convention calls on all State Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can access the physical environment, transportation and information and communication technologies. Yesterday, we celebrated this important article during the International Day of Persons with Disabilities under the theme “Break barriers, open doors: for an inclusive society and development for all.”

These global efforts to make the world more accessible to persons with disabilities must begin – and as the Accessibility Centre demonstrates are beginning – right here in our own hallways. Both the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council have asked the

Secretary-General to implement standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services throughout the United Nations system. For if we are to build a more inclusive world, it is essential that persons with disabilities are able to fully participate in and contribute to our deliberations.

To do so, they not only need to be able to access our meeting rooms, they also need to access information through documents and websites that are designed to be accessible to all. Furthermore, they need assistive technologies such as screen readers, pointing devices or hearing aids. By providing these tools and services, the Accessibility Centre will be instrumental in building an inclusive United Nations.

In this context, the opening of this Centre is of importance for several reasons, Firstly, it sends a signal from the highest levels to people around the world that people with disabilities can and must be brought into the mainstream of social and economic activity. Secondly, it reminds everyone that we value the contributions of persons with disabilities. Thirdly, it is an important step in broadening the democratic principle of inclusiveness, which affirms that all people have a space in this world and are born equal in dignity and rights. Finally, the provision of this space strengthens the principle in Agenda 21 that people are entitled to access information.

As President of the General Assembly, I am committed to supporting the full participation of persons with disabilities in our intergovernmental processes. In this regard, I have begun to explore with DGACM the possibility of producing the General Assembly verbatim records in a digital format accessible to the visually impaired. This will allow us to share the fruits of our deliberations with all, including those who cannot attend meetings.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The international community is opening a new chapter in development history, a chapter that must be based on equality, inclusion and dignity for all. As we begin crafting the post-2015 development agenda, we must ensure that the voices of people with disabilities can

be heard everywhere, in our respective countries as well as within the United Nations conference rooms.

Thank you.

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