

INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY ALLIANCE (IDA)

Member Organizations:

Arab Organization of Disabled People, Disabled People's International,
Down Syndrome International, European Disability Forum,
Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People,
Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their
Families, Pacific Disability Forum,
World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf,
World Federation of the DeafBlind,
World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry

Statement by Yannis Vardakastanis Chair, International Disability Alliance

Excellencies,

Representatives of Member States,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today is a historic day. The international community has gathered here at the Headquarters of the United Nations to discuss the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. There are high expectations, from this meeting, for decision-makers to tackle a structural problem that has not been a priority in national and global political agendas. With your presence today this has changed. Today 15% of the world's population—one billion persons with disabilities—are looking at all of us, in particular to decision-makers at the national and international level. You will make the decisions that affect every aspect of the lives of persons with disabilities and their families. The International Disability Alliance joins this High-Level Meeting to give a voice to persons with disabilities worldwide that have been excluded, but today want to speak loudly and clearly to all of you.

It is well accepted that persons with disabilities are faced with exclusion, discrimination and experience extremely high poverty rates. 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, and many are faced with extreme poverty, restricted access to health care, education, employment opportunities and, in many instances, are the first victims of violence and abuse.

The rights of persons with disabilities remain minimally acknowledged and embodied in international law. Following the adoption and ratification of the UN CRPD, we had expected more. There is no question that the progress already achieved at this level is impressive and unprecedented. But we need to work harder and implement the rights enshrined in the UN CRPD. Persons with disabilities should be able to fully enjoy their rights on an equal basis with all other citizens of the world. I speak of the women and men with disabilities, children and elderly people, who expect full and meaningful participation in society.

The Millennium Development Goals contained no reference to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have been invisible, indeed forgotten. This cannot be tolerated in the post-2015 development agenda. Development at all levels and in every corner of the world must be inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities. It must be UN CRPD driven. Practically this means that the rights of persons with disabilities should be mainstreamed in all aspects of development. Persons with disabilities must be able to enjoy and have their share of inclusive growth. Inclusion, non-discrimination and equity must be the driving principles on which the new global development agenda is framed. In development partnerships the rights of persons with disabilities should be mainstreamed and global development partnerships specific to persons with disabilities should be formed. Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the development agenda has been recognized as critical in the reports of both the Secretary General and High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. You, the decision-makers, together with organisations of persons with disabilities

have the responsibility to make this happen. Ways in which persons with disabilities see their needs reflected in the new framework must be explored, with appropriate implementation mechanisms and accurate monitoring of data.

Persons with disabilities must stop being receivers of lower levels of education, of higher levels of unemployment; they must stop being victims to a system that lacks accessible transportation, healthcare and information services. The post-2015 development agenda must aim to take persons with disabilities out of lower income scales--poverty eradication for persons with disabilities must be fully prioritized. During the negotiations of the UN CRPD and after, the motto "Nothing about us without us" has been a propelling force of progress and determination for persons with disabilities and their families. Today you are listening to us. Tomorrow, listen to the national, regional and global movements of persons with disabilities.

The development of the rights of person with disabilities means that decisions are not taken without their full consultation and involvement through their representative organisations, in accordance with article 4, par. 3 and article 33, par. 3 of the UN CRPD.

Today we ask you not only to express and declare your commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities, but also to put in place the necessary mechanisms to meet these commitments and deliver practical results, in partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities, citizens of Member States, citizens of the world must be able to live their rights on an equal basis with others.

Thank you.