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**Statement by Ambassador Christopher Lu**  
**U.S. Representative to the United Nations for UN Management and Reform**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Resumed Session of the 76<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly**  
**Agenda Item 144: Enhancing accessibility for persons with disabilities to conferences and**  
**meetings of the United Nations system**  
**May 5, 2022**

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*[As Delivered]*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Improving accessibility at the United Nations for persons with disabilities is a top priority for the United States. We are proud to co-chair the Accessibility Steering Committee along with Antigua and Barbuda. This steering committee, which was established by the General Assembly, is a mechanism for Member States to advocate for concrete improvements in accessibility at UN conferences and meetings.

More than 15 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we in the UN system are faced with a disappointing reality: Our own institution still has not achieved full accessibility for persons with disabilities.

To my colleagues in this room: Think about everything you took for granted in preparing for and attending this meeting. You didn't have to worry about registering for the event online – or accessing digital versions of the meeting documents. You didn't have to worry about making your way through the front gate of the building. You didn't think twice about how to navigate the corridors of this large, winding building full of turnstiles, exhibits, stairs, and seating areas. When you entered the room, you looked for your country's name plate and then you sat down at your seat. And then when the proceedings began, you chose one of six languages in which to listen to the speakers.

Now, ask yourself this: What would you have done if you were in a wheelchair – or if you had a visual or a hearing impairment? Who would you have turned to on the UN staff to help you? Now, if you're a delegate, maybe you anticipated these obstacles and knew who to talk to. But what if you were visiting the UN for the first time?

These are the very real barriers that are confronted every single day by delegates, staff, civil society representatives, and guests who come to this building. We have to do better.

That's why we're calling for practical improvements at the UN, including the implementation of a permanent accessible seating arrangement; an accessible exit and entry gate for delegates who are wheelchair users or have reasonable accommodation requirements; and a uniform registration system for all UN meetings and conferences that would centralize reasonable accommodation requests.

Along with physical accessibility, digital spaces must also be designed to be accessible by all. That includes the e-delegate platform, which is critical for registering speakers and uploading and downloading resolutions. And these physical and digital accessibility improvements must be made throughout the UN system, not just here in New York.

We commend the Secretariat for the progress made to date. That includes adjusting bathrooms to make them more accessible, installing power-assisted doors, and creating a wheelchair-accessible entrance at street level. We appreciate the efforts to design an accessible after-hours delegates gate and wheelchair lift for access to the rostrum in the General Assembly Hall, but we regret that neither of these changes have been finalized after more than two years of discussion. These projects need to be completed promptly.

We urge the adoption of this resolution as a symbol of our commitment to full accessibility at the United Nations, and we welcome the participation of other interested Member States in our Accessibility Steering Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.