

2 December 2016

71st session of the General Assembly

**Opening Statement by H.E. Peter Thomson,
Tenth Anniversary of the Adoption of the Convention on
the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the General Assembly, I am pleased to join with you all today on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to take this moment to recognize the important contribution persons with disabilities make each and every day to our lives, societies and our world.

The adoption 10 years ago of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was a milestone in the international community's efforts to promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities.

As one of the most quickly and widely ratified treaties in history, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol reflect the strength of the global commitment to ensuring people with disabilities are enabled to live lives of dignity, opportunity and respect.

Important gains have been made over the last 10 years to turn these commitments into concrete action, including to combat discrimination and to change social attitudes.

However, much work remains to be done to achieve equality for the estimated 1 billion people around our world who live with disabilities.

Last year's adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a crucial step forward in our efforts to achieve the goals of the Convention.

The 2030 Agenda provides humanity with a universal masterplan to transform our world through an inclusive and people-centered approach to sustainable development.

If implemented urgently, effectively and at scale, the seventeen interlinked Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda will eradicate extreme poverty, build inclusive and peaceful societies, advance gender equality, combat climate change, and protect our natural environment.

In a world where more than 80 percent of people with disabilities live in poverty – most of whom are in developing countries – many people face significant barriers to social, economic and political participation; to quality education and learning; to accessible transport systems and public spaces; to productive employment and decent work; and to receiving equal pay for work of equal value.

In each of these areas the 2030 Agenda provides specific targets to eliminate these barriers, and to enable the full participation in society of persons with disabilities.

And the implementation of the 2030 Agenda overall will also serve to empower people with disabilities by promoting their rights, improving their opportunities, and ensuring that they are able to live productive lives of dignity for all.

The 2030 Agenda was adopted on the fundamental promise to ‘leave no one behind’.

This commitment requires that Governments work to ensure that development gains across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals reach all people in society, including people with disabilities.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, we have already begun to see the mainstreaming of the rights and needs of persons with disabilities into development frameworks around the world.

This work must be built on with resolve if the 2030 Agenda is to be achieved for persons with disabilities. Three key steps present themselves:

One, as Governments mainstream the SDGs into their national planning and budgeting, they should ensure that a disability-sensitive perspective is brought to these processes, one that takes into account the compounding effects of gender and age-discrimination.

Two, we must adopt targeted strategies to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda – as well as other relevant legislative and policy processes – in line with commitments under the Convention.

And three, all stakeholders – including Governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector – should develop strategic partnerships to ramp up disability-sensitive SDG implementation, including by mobilizing resources, driving innovation, and improving data collection disaggregated by disability.

Excellencies,

As a legally-binding instrument, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities provides the strongest international commitment we can make to promoting and protecting the human rights of all persons with disabilities.

On this the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention, I therefore call on all States that have yet to sign and ratify the Convention and its Optional Protocol, to do so.

Universal ratification of the Convention would send a clear sign to persons with disabilities, their families, their advocates and representatives of a universal commitment by humanity to achieve a world in which persons with disabilities are fully respected, their abilities are recognized and in which they are able to reach their full potential. A world, indeed, where no one is left behind.

I thank you.