INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (ICC)

Statement of the
International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to the
Eighth Conference of State Parties of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

9 June 2015
UN Headquarters, New York
Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

Today, I am addressing you on behalf of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (the ICC) which represents more than 100 National Human Rights Institutions around the world, 71 of which are accredited in compliance with the Paris Principles.

NHRI have long championed the rights of persons with disabilities. They played a vital role in the drafting of the CRPD and are now actively involved in its implementation.

As public bodies with a legal or constitutional human rights mandate, acting independently of states and aided by their experience in redressing human rights claims, educating the public about rights and working with civil societies, NHRI are ideally suited to help transform the words of the CRPD into practical action at the domestic level.

Mr. President,

As you know, in 2000, the international community came together to develop a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of the world’s most disadvantaged citizens. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals by all members of the UN and 23 international organizations was indeed a significant achievement.

Missing from the MDGs, however, was an acknowledgement of the specific development needs of a particularly vulnerable group: the 1 billion people in the world with disabilities. As is all too common, people with disabilities were invisible.

The world has changed in the 15 years since the MDGs were adopted. The CRPD was drafted, adopted, and is now being implemented around the world. The cloak of invisibility has been lifted. The world has acknowledged that people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else. Key among these rights is the claim of all people with disabilities to develop to their full potential in community with their fellow citizens.
The ICC welcomes the development of the Sustainable Development Goals. The proposed SDGs are a bold and fairly comprehensive set of goals and targets which reflect human rights standards better than the MDGs. For example, it has been proposed to measure progress towards all goals with data disaggregated by groups, including persons with disabilities, to ensure that no-one is left behind. In addition, the zero draft of the Post-2015 Agenda, which has been circulated recently, proposes a monitoring and review framework in which civil society participates meaningfully – this creates an important channel of engagement for persons with disabilities.

However, all those are advances that need to be defended and further deepened over the coming weeks and months. In particular, to maintain the ambition of the proposed targets, the indicators that are now being developed need to be disability-sensitive - not just in some, but in all areas. To this end, organisation of persons with disabilities as well as National Human Rights Institutions should be involved in processes to develop SDGs indicators.

The ICC therefore encourages states to keep the ambition of the SDGs high - if we manage to achieve a strong Outcome Document at the Post-2015 Summit in September, the new goals will have the potential to better fulfill the promise of human rights for current and future generations, including for persons with disabilities.

Mr. President,

“Nothing about us without us” inspired the work of those drafting the CRPD. The international community of people with disabilities should be commended for their efforts to ensure that they are not invisible in the SDGs. The results have been encouraging.

NHRIs work every day on the frontlines of the struggle for equality for people with disabilities. We collectively offer these observations:

Too often, disability and poverty go hand-in-hand. A lack of employment opportunities, the failure of employers to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities, inaccessible transportation and buildings,
inadequate health and social support systems – these factors lead to a mutually reinforcing loop from which it is often difficult to break free.

The effects of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination result in additional vulnerability for many. Women and girls, Indigenous peoples, racialized minorities – the specific needs of these individuals must be recognized and addressed.

The ICC encourages all states and international organizations to support the adoption and implementation of SDGs that are disability-inclusive. The ICC and its members are firmly committed to working with their respective national governments, civil society and the community of people with disabilities to help ensure that, in 2030, we can celebrate real progress for all the citizens of the world including those with disabilities. To this end, in line with the ICC statement to the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on a Follow-up and Review Mechanism for the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, we would like to recall that the current economic crisis should not be used as an excuse for restricting social rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities.

Mr President, on behalf of the ICC, I thank you for the opportunity to make this statement.

M L Mushwana
ICC Chairperson