Dear moderator, distinguished panellists, Ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured to take this opportunity to speak on behalf of persons with disabilities stakeholders group. My name is Yetnebersh Nigussie and I work as senior inclusion advisor for Light for the World International.

Persons with disabilities comprise an estimated 15 per cent of the world’s population, or one billion people, of whom 80 per cent live in developing countries and are overrepresented among those living in absolute poverty. They often encounter discrimination and exclusion on a daily basis.

Persons with disabilities were not referenced in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and as a result were excluded from many important development initiatives and funding streams around the world. Experiences with the previous MDGs, and the target on primary education which was framed in universal terms, demonstrates that simply stating that the target must be met by all is not enough. There have been concerns that the target created incentives for governments to focus on ‘low hanging fruit’ rather than those most in need. Evidences show that children with disabilities were not sent to school on an equal basis with other children; Women with disabilities were not included on the gender equality discourse taking place at different level.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes persons with disabilities and has thus opened doors for their participation and recognition as active contributing members of society: who must not face any discrimination or be left out or behind. The principle of leaving noone behind is a crucial development achieved in the SDGs to insure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the upcoming global development roadmap. This principle ascertains that No goal should be met unless it is met for everyone.

The inclusion and the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all phases of implementation is critical, not only to ensure that they are not left behind, but also because only they are the true experts when it comes to their complete inclusion in society. Bringing persons with disabilities explicitly into mainstream development discourse will not only benefit us, it will enable the world to realize that there is immense untapped potential to transform the world into a better place for all people

Persons with disabilities strongly believe that only by utilizing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as a guiding framework in implementing the SDGs, will it be ensured that exclusion and inequality are not created or perpetuated. This includes institutional, attitudinal, physical and legal barriers, and barriers to information and communication, among others. No goal should be considered achieved unless it is achieved for everyone!

the outcome document for September 2015: A commitment by governments to identify the groups being left furthest behind by progress on different goals in their countries within the first three years after the SDGs are agreed. As part of regular reporting on progress on the SDGs, governments should identify the rate of progress on each target for the groups that are the furthest behind (for example, women and men with disabilities with detailed information on the type of impairments depending on the specific target).

There is a need to clearly map out the various causes of inequalities and try to tackle them comprehensively. Even though there is a general consensus to the marginalization of persons with disabilities by development actors, there is a need to understand that persons with disabilities are hetrogenous groups. Even Among them, women and girls with disabilities as well as those with multiple disabilities are left farthest behind.

For Example: Girls with disabilities face additional barriers due to their disability, placing them at higher risk of being out of school or dropping out. This is particularly true for girls with intellectual or developmental disabilities (WHO/World Bank, 2011). Women and girls with disabilities experience higher rates of gender-based violence, sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment and exploitation than women and girls without disabilities.[[1]](#endnote-1) Studies have shown that women and girls with disabilities are three times more likely to experience gender-based violence compared to non-disabled women.Such violence may happen in all settings including in homes, schools and institutions. One survey of 3706 primary school children aged 11–14 in Uganda found that 24% of disabled girls reported experiencing sexual violence at school compared with 12% of non-disabled girls.

In spite of these multiple layers of inequality and repeated commitments from policymakers, strategies targeting women and girls seldom refer to women and girls with disabilities, thus making them invisible in plans, monitoring reports and statistics

In conclusion, We need persons with disabilities to be part of identifying the problems, and to be part of building the solutions. We should focus on addressing the structural causes of poverty, inequality and exclusion, rather than just providing short-term solutions.

1. In his 2006 *In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women,* the Secretary-General observed that surveys conducted in Europe, North America and Australia have shown that over half of women with disabilities have experienced physical abuse, compared to one third of non-disabled women. A/61/122/Add.1, para. 152, citing to Human Rights Watch, “Women and girls with disabilities”, available at: http://hrw.org/women/ disabled.html. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)