

# **Communique from the African Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities**

*On the occasion of the Sixth Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) 2020, being held under the overall theme “A Decade to Deliver a Transformed and Prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”, February 24 to 27 2020 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.*

This year marks a special importance in the history of our movement as this is the first Forum happening after the UN Secretary-General launched the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy and the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa. These are bold measures taken by the UN and the African Union to leave no one behind and to live up to the expectation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The African Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities under the auspices of the newly created African Regional Coordination Civil Society Mechanism has brought together more than 20 persons with different types of disabilities from several African countries including Zimbabwe, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Nigeria, Mozambique, Kenya, Ghana and Ethiopia. This is a clear demonstration of a significant increase in the number of persons with disabilities in the Forum.

Africa is home for the majority of persons with disabilities globally, as indicated by the WHO and the World Bank. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063 needs to be inclusive of persons with disabilities, but we have heard nothing regarding their inclusion in review processes. **We call on all governments to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in VNR processes on the national and local level**.

During the ARFSD 2020, persons with disabilities were not given the chance to speak either in the opening or closing session. We highly appreciate the interventions of youth representatives on these occasions. However, we believe that those left furthest behind – persons with disabilities – need to be brought to the front as well. **We therefore call upon the organizing bureau to add in future forums a speaker with a disability in the opening or in the closing panel, as is annually practiced at the UN in New York and other regional forums**.

We have felt resistance in trying to include disability in discussions at this forum. Even though we have disabilities, we are also women, youth, older persons, workers, farmers, academicians, innovators, scientists, politicians, economists and entrepreneurs. This fact should not make us only fit to one category. **We strongly recommend all participants at the forum to take an intersectional approach to these discussions on discrimination**.

54 African countries attended the Forum over the past days. But only six countries have signed the African Union Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so far. This protocol offers African solutions to the problems observed at this Forum. **We urge all African countries to make this important step towards disability inclusion for Agenda 2063**.

Together let’s strive to build an inclusive and prosperous Africa we want!

African Stakeholders Group of Persons with Disabilities

February 26, 2020

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe