

**Speech delivered by Mr. Knut Ostby, UN Resident and Humanitarian
Coordinator a.i., on the occasion of the
International Day for Persons with Disabilities**

3 December 2017, Nay Pyi Taw

Excellency, Dr. Win Myat Aye, Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement;
Excellencies . Union Ministers; Deputy Ministers; Representatives from the Government of the
Union of Myanmar; Members of Parliament; Representatives from Civil Society, especially those
that are representing people with disabilities; Distinguished Representatives from the Diplomatic
Corps; Civil Society; Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen .

Min-ga-lar-ba. And a very good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to speak today, as we observe yet again the day to celebrate the
abilities of People with Disabilities (or PWD).

This day . the international day for people with disabilities has been celebrated since 1993 . so
for the past 24 years. This year, we mark this special occasion under the theme of
Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all+.

The theme calls for renewing our commitment to the core principle of Agenda 2030 and the
Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs) of leaving no one behind. Thematic discussions on
and around disability are referenced in various parts of the SDGs. Most notably in sections related
to education, growth and employment inequality, and accessibilities of human settlements,
amongst others.

In addition to recognizing, remembering and celebrating the abilities and the unique contributions
that people with disabilities make to society, this day is observed to raise awareness and
understanding of disability issues. To remind all that not only do PWD need special assistance,
but that they are also very much contributing to the well-being of the society they live in. We
recognize that they are indeed powerful change agents.

Today provides an opportunity for us to reflect where we are in terms of our work to create an
inclusive environment where no one is left behind. We reflect and ask: What have we done to
make this a reality? What have we achieved? What is yet to be done?

First, I would like to recognize that Myanmar ratified the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities in 2011. And in 2015, Myanmar adopted a progressive law on people with disabilities. An important provision in the law is an employment quota for people with disabilities.

Let me recall a few examples of work that the UN in Myanmar, in strong partnership with the Government and civil society, is doing to this end. These are just very few examples that show the collaboration we have in this area.

On 21 November this year, ILO organized a workshop on implementation of the new law, with Government, employers and civil society organizations.

In partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, UNFPA provided technical assistance in the 2014 Census that included questions developed by Washington Group on Disabilities to have a better and clearer understanding of the disability situation in the country, and the report was launched in August of this year.

In 2016, UNICEF launched the [Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities](#), the first comprehensive qualitative study conducted to increase knowledge and awareness about the situation and the rights of children with disabilities in Myanmar.

Led by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), UNICEF also is providing technical support to develop the bylaw/regulations for the law on the rights of the persons with disabilities. This has been submitted to the Union Attorney General's Office and we look forward to the final approval. The Government has recently formed National Committee on the rights of the persons with disabilities which, I understand, is expected to begin monitoring on how the rights of PWDs are fulfilled. I know that my colleagues from UNICEF are already working closely with and supporting it.

UNDP is also working with Union Attorney General's Office to finalise the Fair Trial Manual to include a section that is sensitive to persons who experience challenges in communication and who need signers or skilled help to communicate effectively during trials and when reporting crimes. Under the leadership of the Union Civil Service Board, UNDP is assisting with the review of the Civil Service Rules to ensure full inclusivity, fairness and non-discrimination including for people with disabilities.

These are just a few examples. And I can go on more about our efforts. But the question I asked earlier for internal reflection is, are they enough? We know that despite all out efforts, there is still much to be done. We can, should and must do more to realize that the inclusive society we aspire to reach, and underscore our pledge that no one is left behind.

On behalf of the UN system, I strongly reaffirm our commitment to work towards all-inclusive society in Myanmar - where opportunities for inclusion, in education, in health and in job

opportunities are maximized for all people, especially those that we celebrate today . the people with disability. I also pledge to work with you to end exclusion, vulnerability and diminished quality of life and access to resources are minimized and finally totally eliminated.

I now have the honour to read the Secretary General's message:

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

3 December 2017

“Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all”

Resilience is central to achieving sustainable development. In its pledge to leave no one behind, the 2030 Agenda embodies a commitment to building the capacities of those who face marginalization and exclusion, in order to reduce their vulnerability to economic, social and environmental shocks.

In recent years, the international community has achieved notable progress in advancing the rights of the world's one billion persons with disabilities. Disability is recognized as a cross-cutting issue in the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Yet, persons with disabilities remain too often excluded from the design, planning and implementation of policies and programmes that have an impact on their lives. Too often they face discrimination in labour markets and in access to education and other services.

To overcome this challenge, the path towards inclusive, accessible, usable facilities, technologies, infrastructure, services and products must be ensured by, for and with persons with disabilities. We must build on their agency, working together to design, develop and implement affordable and innovative solutions to realize equality for all.

On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let us remove physical and cultural barriers, build resilient societies and create opportunities that truly leave no one behind.

And let me add at the end a quote from H.E. the State Counsellor from November last year:

“The most important is respect. Every individual has the right to respect.”

I thank you for your attention. Chee zoo tin ba de.

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