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**World Health Organization**  
**WHA 74 – 27 May 2021**

**The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities (26.4)**

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Thank you Chair,

I will address item 26.4.

Resolution EB148.R6 on "The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities" is a result of a joint effort of Member States and the WHO secretariat. We would like to thank all Member states who joined us in co-sponsoring this resolution.

The resolution calls attention to a range of barriers, including physical barriers that prevent access for persons with disabilities to health facilities; informational barriers that prevent access to health literacy; and attitudinal barriers, which give rise to discrimination severely affecting the rights of persons with disabilities.

This is the first resolution proposed on this topic, after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As such, it follows the path of, and builds on the same principles that the Convention outlined: moving away from a medical approach to disabilities, and adopting a comprehensive social model, which is people centered and human rights based.

Chair,

"Nothing about us without us" is not just a catch phrase. Meaningfully involving persons with disabilities in decision-making processes is a precondition for ensuring disability inclusion.

Accordingly, throughout the process of working on this resolution, we closely consulted with, and actively involved, persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

Many of the people we talked to testified that although their lives and the lives of their families are intertwined with the world of health, they often feel that this world values them less. In many of our societies, a body with a disability is still considered to be a "broken body" and assistive technology is considered a luxury, a special effort, a burden.

Chair,

Aspiring to achieve "the highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities" is a change in mind-set. It is an inclusive approach that will allow persons with disabilities to play more significant roles in their communities, in their workplace, and within their families. An individual who can enjoy a good standard of health is more able and confident to fully participate economically, culturally, and politically on an equal basis with others, thus contributing to the realization of several SDGs and the overarching "leave no one behind" principle.

We call on the WHO to continue working with representative organizations of persons with disabilities, and deepen these relations even further, to assure that their perspectives and needs are incorporated and taken into account in policy and programme work. In this regards, we would like to positively acknowledge WHO's Diversity and Inclusion strategy, mentioned in the human resources annual report. Ensuring to create a work environment welcoming to all, where everyone feels valued and can perform at their best, will benefit all staff. The strategy which focus includes persons with disabilities will bring diverse voices to the discussion that are usually not heard.

Chair,

We would like to highlight one more element in the resolution. In a comprehensive health system, rehabilitation is one of the key services. Rehabilitation encompasses a broad set of therapeutic measures that are essential to a large portion of the world's population living with different health conditions, including an ageing population, people who suffer from different non-communicable diseases and injuries, and persons living with disabilities.

Therefore, increasing access to quality rehabilitation services can significantly improve a population's health outcomes and foster inclusive, sustainable development. Rehabilitation services, as all other health services, should be accessible and affordable.

WHO's Rehabilitation program, Rehabilitation 2030, is a step in the right direction, which we would like to see strengthened in the near future.

I thank you for your attention.