

**A STATEMENT BY HON JOHN MAJISI, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR
KRACHI NCHUMURU CONSTITUENCY ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
(IDPD), 3RD DECEMBER 2019.**

INTRODUCTION

Right Honourable Speaker, an overview of the **global situation** is that more than one billion people with visible and invisible disabilities globally, that is about 15% of the world's population or one in seven people are living with one form of disability or another. By conservative extrapolation using the World Disability Report estimates, Ghana's population of persons living with visible and invisible disabilities is about **4.5 million**. The largest minority group as noted by Nalule (2011).

Inadequacies in the Society

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of inadequacies in the lives of persons with disabilities. They are among the most marginalized groups in the world and they have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities (WHO, 2017).

It is noted that the inequality experienced by persons with disabilities is often due to some societal barriers such as attitudinal barriers, environmental barriers, institutional barriers, and barriers that have been internalised by persons with disabilities themselves. Several efforts are being made both at the national and global levels to address the barriers thereby promoting **Disability-inclusive development**. Thus, Persons with Disabilities are **inclusive** of and accessible to developmental processes at all stages. It requires that all persons be afforded equal access to education, health care services, work and employment, and social protection, among others.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

Right Honourable Speaker, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) which is celebrated on the 3rd of December every year has been commemorated since 1992, to promote awareness and mobilize support for critical issues relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the benefits of an inclusive and accessible society for **all**. The celebration of the Day every year is characterised by a unique theme to promote action to raise awareness about disability issues.

As Ghana joins the rest of the world today, Tuesday 3rd December, 2019 to celebrate **THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY**, the theme is '**promoting the participation of persons with disabilities and their leadership: taking action on the 2030 Development Agenda**'.

Mr. Speaker, the theme focuses on the empowerment of persons with disabilities for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development as envisaged in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which pledges to 'leave no one behind'. The theme also recognizes disability as a cross-cutting issue, to be considered in the implementation of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Ghana, the Ghana Federation of Persons with Disability Organizations (GFD) and its Partners have chosen the theme, **“Disability Inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals; Renewing Commitments and mobilizing support from stakeholders.** The focus of this national theme builds on the global direction to promote greater commitment and partnerships that support the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in the implementation of the SDGs in Ghana.

Making the Theme a Reality

Empowerment

Mr. Speaker, Persons with disabilities have been marginalized for a long time and have, therefore, become consented with inferiority positions in the society. They need to be empowered in order not to be left behind. Empowerment is about getting the voices of Persons with Disabilities heard. **By promoting empowerment, real opportunities for people are created. This enhances their own capacities and supports them in setting their own priorities. Empowerment involves investing in people – in jobs, health, nutrition, education, and social protection. When people are empowered, they are better prepared to take advantage of opportunities, they become agents of change and can be more readily positioned to embrace their civic responsibilities.**

The empowerment of persons with disabilities will make them to be active participants and contributors in their families and communities. Barriers in communities are removed and people with disabilities are accepted as people with potentialities. People with disabilities and their families are able to access developmental benefits and services in their communities to limit their segregation.

Right Honourable Speaker, change must start with people with disabilities shifting their mindset from being passive receivers to active contributors. This shift in thinking is important for overcoming the attitudinal, institutional and physical barriers that have prevailed for long in many communities. District Assemblies can facilitate this process by raising awareness about disability issues, human rights and the potentials they have, providing information, building capacity for People with disabilities and making sure that there are a range of skills and knowledge developed for them to enable them participate and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities. Finally, persons with disabilities, especially their leaders and their representative Disability organisations must ensure that current policies and future ones reflect well on persons with disabilities. The slogan, “nothing without us” must be adhered to well.

Partnership

Mr. Speaker, the need for partnership among stakeholders in inclusive development is crucial. **Goal 17 of the SDGs** maintains: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be realized with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation between Governments, the private sector and civil society organisations.

Resources are limited and one single stakeholder will not be able to provide resources to meet the SDGs. As stakeholders, as we work towards the achievement of the dividends of SDGs, we must optimize the use of the limited resources.

The need for transparent partnership is crucial. With the commitment to “leave no one behind”, Persons with disabilities should be recognized as equal partners, and be consulted by Governments. There must be deliberate and purposeful collaboration between persons with disabilities and stakeholders and for that matter Government. Persons with disabilities must be included in policy discussions to ensure their needs are addressed in all policy development and review processes.

Mainstreaming Disability into Development Agenda

Right Honourable Speaker, though persons with disabilities are about 15% of the world population, they are likely to become invisible in society in view of the barriers that confront them in every society. To overcome the invisibility, and the discrimination of persons with disabilities, it is imperative that countries improve on mainstream actions on disability and to ensure that national planning, strategies, programmes, and budgets are to promote equal participation of persons with disabilities in the society, particularly in the areas of education, health, and employment. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute an unprecedented global agreement to build a future that is sustainable and inclusive for all. The inclusive nature of the 2030 Agenda, provides a unique opportunity to develop policies that benefit persons with disabilities. Disability is a cross cutting issue and must be accordingly mainstreamed into every facet of our developmental agenda. Our National Budgets should be used to leverage disability into development and business paradigms within inclusive policies and programmes, rather than the usual welfare integrated as a tokenism approach. We should expect every Ministry to clearly spell out disability-related indicators of inclusion in terms of policies, programmes, and human resource, within the wider scope of accessibility.

Mr. Speaker, Ghana’s Development Plan should improve accessibility; participation in political, social, and cultural aspects; promoting inclusive development as a guideline in the national budget and planning; enhancing accessibility in public infrastructure and information. It should create an enabling environment for private sector and enterprises to come up with initiatives for inclusion of persons with disabilities; equal access to education, healthcare services, and employment.

Since 2013, Parliament of Ghana has been working towards an inclusive House. As a major stakeholder, Parliament still has a lot more to do including:

- improving on the built environment to make it more disability friendly
- the need for a disability desk
- basic training in orientation and mobility as well as sign language for the personnel at the front desk
- Parliament must work more seriously towards amending Ghana’s Disability Law to conform to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

Thank you for the opportunity, Right Honourable Speaker.