

**Remarks by Ms. Megan Smith, Gender and Development Officer, International Disability Alliance at the UN-Women Executive Board informal briefing on UN-Women's work and approach to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities**

Wednesday, 12 September 2018

*[As delivered]*<sup>1</sup>

Thank you very much for the invitation today,

It's a pleasure to speak to you today about the current work our organization is doing with UN Women. I represent the International Disability Alliance which is an umbrella organization of persons with disabilities and their organisations. We represent eight global and disability specific organisations, such as the World Federation of the Deaf and the World Blind Union, as well as 6 regional organisations of persons with disabilities representing every region of the world. Estimated to represent over 1200 organisations of persons with disabilities. We advocate at the UN for a more inclusive global environment for persons with disabilities and their organisations. For IDA, a key focus of ours has been on advocating for the rights and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities with in all of their diversity and different intersecting identities. Both UN Women and IDA have recognized that women and girls with disabilities are amongst the most marginalized not only within the gender equality movement but also within the disability rights movement.

In this recognition, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UN Women earlier this year with the aim to strengthen UN Women's capacity to mainstream the inclusion and support the rights of persons with disabilities within their work particularly within the Flagship Programme Initiatives. As well as mainstreaming gender and the empowerment of women and girls with disabilities within IDA and our members work. A fundamental part of this partnership has been bridging the gap between gender equality and disability rights actors.

Earlier this year through the project "Making it Work" led by our international partners Humanity and Inclusion, IDA and UN Women collaborated at a Regional Roundtable in Nairobi on the topic of "Better Addressing the Intersectionality of Gender and Disability in Africa: regional opportunities"

This collaboration uniquely brought together women with disability advocates who came from diverse backgrounds, mainstream gender focused organisations, international human rights organisations and UN Women regional and country offices. The gathering at the regional roundtable provided the critical connection between such groups, and provided UN Women with direct linkages to women with disabilities organisations who are able to support their

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<sup>1</sup> Webcast available at: <http://webtv.un.org/watch/empowerment-of-women-and-girls-with-disabilities/5834147781001/>.

current work to include women and girls with disabilities in their flagship programme on data and statistics.

Further, at the end of July IDA facilitated a disability inclusion training for UN Women headquarters staff. Through the interactive one-day session, IDA and UN Women discussed the fundamental tools needed for the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities, the ways that disability can be viewed through a feminist lens, and began to link these concepts to their own sector specific strategic plans. This workshop provided a bases to plan several capacity building webinars for country level teams, and for in country capacity building trainings on disability inclusion to be planned later this year between IDA and UN Women.

IDA very much values the partnership with UN Women and are very positive to build on this momentum for the increased inclusion of women and girls with disabilities.