

Excellencies, ladies and Gentleman,

I am Mark Mapemba, I am from Malawi and I am a self-advocate. A self-advocate is a person with an intellectual disability who speaks up about their rights.

I would like to speak today about inclusive environments and what it means for people with intellectual disabilities.

People with an intellectual disability are a group of people who are most often left behind and are not included. This is because communities do not understand the barriers we face and the support, time and accommodations we need to take part and be included.

Inclusive environments should be environments that are inclusive of everyone, where everyone can access and take part. These environments could be our family home, our school, our workplace, public services like banks or transportation

In all of these places we should have the information, accommodations, support and time that we need to access them and take part in our community.

Universal design is about accessibility for everyone including people with disabilities. Now, people with intellectual disabilities cannot access or have challenges to access many facilities. There are barriers like complicated information or lack of access to technology or no support. When a facility like public transportation or a bank is designed well we can all access it on our own. Universal design can make the accessibility of a facility, better but we must also make sure someone who may have individual needs is not left out.

Some examples from my personal experience of accessibility and being included well is when I became a member of the local council in my community, the information and documents were not sent in good time. I asked to receive information and documents with enough time before the meeting. This is so I can go through them understand them well and ask any questions.

Another example is from my experience as an officer of Inclusion International, one of the accommodations is that I receive easy to understand information and before each meeting, I have a pre-meeting with my support person and staff so that we can review and understand the papers and be prepared.

It is important that governments and organizations from civil society work together. Governments should develop inclusive plans with people with intellectual disabilities. People with disabilities understand the barriers and can identify them in different sectors. People with disabilities should also be part of making the plans happen.

Currently, Inclusion International and Down Syndrome International are working together to produce international guidelines on inclusive participation. These are the Listen, Include, Respect guidelines. These guidelines are made with people with intellectual disabilities. They are for Governments and other organizations and are about on how they can make sure people with intellectual disabilities are included and can take part in their work,

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activities and decision making. We hope these guidelines will make sure that fewer people are left behind. Thank you,