



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT

BY

**H.E. MRS. BAINDU DASSAMA-KAMARA**  
MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE

AT THE

**SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES  
PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON  
THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

NEW YORK, 13<sup>TH</sup>-15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023

*Check Against Delivery*

336 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street, New York NY 10017  
Tel: (212) 688 1656 - FAX (212) 688 4924 email: [sierraleone@pmun.net](mailto:sierraleone@pmun.net)

**Mr. President**  
**Excellencies,**  
**Distinguished Delegates**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President and other members of your Bureau on your election to steer this session and to thank you for the excellent manner in which you are conducting the affairs of the session.

This year's theme, *Harmonizing National Policies and Strategies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD): Achievements and Challenges*, could not have been most timely and relevant than now, in addressing the concerns and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in our world today.

Despite the tireless efforts of Persons with disabilities to combat and eliminate stigma and non-discrimination, this very important sector of society continues to confront fundamental threats in their pursuit to achieve equality of

opportunities and access to social services among many others. Indeed, these threats arise mainly from the diversity of policies and strategies in various Member States and, has been a major hindrance to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities as well as their inclusion at all levels of development.

Sierra Leone, especially under the leadership of H.E President Julius Maada Bio, has prioritized the harmonization of national policies and strategies to facilitate compliance, enforcement and service delivery to persons with disabilities. Thanks to the requisite political will and the nation's conviction that we cannot build a disability friendly and inclusive society **without** harmonizing our national policies and strategies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Hence, Sierra Leone spared no time in taking the bold step to harmonize policies and strategies in line with the CRPD

provisions with view to (a) **tackling and alleviating the challenges confronting our compatriots with disabilities** and (b) **enhancing their self-esteem and promoting socio economic empowerment and livelihood support systems** for them.

Mr. President, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the establishment of the **National Commission for Persons with Disability** together with the **National Consortium on the Enhancement of Persons with Disabilities**, constituting both State and Non-State actors, has served as an effective coordination mechanism for the harmonization of our national policies and strategies in Sierra Leone. Accordingly, the Government of Sierra Leone has taken the following policy options and actions:

- (i) The introduction of an inclusive education system - one that is accessible to all children and responds to the diverse realities and needs of all learners has ensured that schools across the

country are accessible to, and inclusive of, all children especially learners with disabilities;

- (ii) The adoption of an Inclusive and Special Needs Education Curriculum for pre-service training of teachers at the Teachers' Certificate Level.
- (iii) The training and recruitment of special needs teachers to address the existing dearth in this area.
- (iv) The development of Assistive Technology Standards, the compilation of assistive products specifications and the integration of rehabilitation and assistive technology services at all levels of health care delivery systems have ensured that assistive technology products are appropriate to enhance the functionality of persons with disabilities in Sierra Leone.

The harmonization of our national policies and strategies has also enhanced the expansion of the social safety net programme to cover persons with all categories of disabilities. This transfer of cash to persons with disabilities has immensely contributed to their socio-economic empowerment thereby addressing a myriad of challenges including the increasing spate of street begging among persons with disabilities.

Additionally, the employment of persons with disabilities and the provision of special incentives to employers of persons with disabilities provisions contained in the Employment Act are geared towards increased employment of persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, promoting the inclusion and active participation of persons with disabilities in political life and the general decision-making process is one of the fundamental human rights that have now been upheld by

political parties through the introduction of wings for persons with disabilities in their constitutions.

Mr. President, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is worth noting that while the lives of persons with disabilities are being improved through the harmonization of our policies and strategies, there are some provisions in our policies and strategies that are not in sync with some entrenched provisions in the 1991 Constitution of the country; and where such variations exist, the Constitution takes precedence, largely because entrenched clauses cannot be easily amended.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude this statement by reaffirming Sierra Leone's commitment to work with the International Community and other key stakeholders in improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities. While we express our kind appreciation to the International Community for providing the required

technical and financial support towards the June 24, 2023 general elections in Sierra Leone, we wish to appeal for a review of our first country report on the status of implementation of the CRPD submitted a little over two years ago and at the same time call upon the United Nations to establish a **United Nations Agency exclusively on disability** related issues.

I thank you for your kind attention.