



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

STATEMENT

BY

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AT

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

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(Please check against delivery)

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

**Mr. President, Excellencies, and distinguished Delegates**

Let me take this first opportunity, on behalf of the Sierra Leone delegation to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the **17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and to assure you of my delegation's support for the successful conduct of the session.

**'Rethinking Disability Inclusion in the Current International Juncture and Ahead of the Summit of the Future'** is timely, appropriate, and realistic. It sets the stage for all actors to adopt a more coordinated and consensual approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sierra Leone, under the leadership of His Excellency Brigadier Retired Dr Julius Maada Bio, has continued to roll out robust disability inclusion policy options borne out of his deep conviction that the Sustainable Development Goals will only be achieved with the inclusion of persons with disabilities, as

the mantra of leaving no one behind constitutes the bedrock of the SDGs call to action.

Mr. President, Sierra Leone has made remarkable progress in making disability inclusion real in both policy formulation and programme implementation. So, this year, we are here with a vibrant critical mass of persons with disabilities to share lessons learned from our breakthroughs and challenges as we converge here to rethink appropriate strategies for disability inclusion ensuring to leave no one behind.

Mr. President, disability inclusion is so engrained in today's Sierra Leone that almost every new development prioritizes inclusivity, including the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024-2030), which serves as a strategic plan aimed at guiding the country's development efforts towards the achievement of the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals while ensuring that no-one is left behind.

Additionally, chapter 12 of our country's draft revised Civil Service Code, Regulations, and Rules amply provides for equal job opportunities, non-discrimination, the availability of a disabled-friendly work environment, and reasonable

adjustment including credible and accessible information to enhance the employment of persons with disabilities.

A key focus of all these initiatives has been to promote peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, reducing inequalities, and empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, regardless of age, sex, disability, or other status.

The implementation of the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools and the Free Quality School Education Initiative have led to a quantum leap in making schools accessible to, and inclusive of learners with disabilities thereby also creating equitable access to learning. These efforts have increased the enrolment of children with disabilities in schools.

Policy actions such as the nation's **Free Healthcare Initiative for Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Children Under Five** as well as the **Assistive Technology Policy** have both led to increased access to free-of-charge medical care and services, expanded to cover persons with disabilities and the

alleviation of impairments and barriers to people's participation as equal members of society.

The award of a grant by the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, through the Multi-Partners Trust Fund, has contributed significantly to Sierra Leone's implementation of disability-inclusive initiatives and processes. These include, among other things, the rollout of capacity-building programmes for right holders and duty bearers on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Disability Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is worth noting that last year's International Day of Persons with Disabilities commemoration was used as a platform for various sectors to speak on inclusion within their sectors. The panel discussions on topics related to tailored inclusion served as a stocktaking exercise on inclusion in those sectors. Interestingly, since then, the Human Resource Management Office has prioritized the recruitment of persons with disabilities.

Mr. President, Distinguished Ladies, and Gentlemen, as our nation strives to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, it is sad to report that the increasing spate of drug and substance abuse among our youthful population has had a corresponding negative effect on their well-being. Many of these people with an addiction have acquired various forms of disabilities either through accidental injury or through the side effects of the drug. Changes triggered in the brain structures of drug addicts have led to a surge in cases of mental impairments.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by reaffirming Sierra Leone's commitment to working with the International Community and other key stakeholders to reconsider disability inclusion ahead of the summit of the future.

In conclusion, I extend our deepest gratitude to the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for its unwavering support in championing this noble cause. Your dedication has been instrumental in our progress, and for that, we are profoundly thankful.

However, the journey toward full inclusion and rights for persons with disabilities is far from over. Therefore, I make a heartfelt and passionate appeal for the review of our inaugural country report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which we submitted over two years ago. Your timely and thorough review is crucial for us to continue making strides in this vital area.

Furthermore, as we stand on the precipice of a new phase in our journey, I fervently request Sierra Leone's reselection for the next round of the Multi-Partners Trust Fund as we await the establishment of a United Nations Agency exclusively on disability-related issues.

I thank you.

