

Opening Ceremony
ESCAP High-level Inter-governmental Meeting

Mr. PARK Yonghyun
Assistant Minister of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea

Distinguished Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I feel honored to host this High-level Inter-governmental Meeting here in Songdo, Incheon, to review the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of the persons with disabilities which was declared in Biwako, and also declare a new Decade. I welcome all of you!

Over the past 20 years, ESCAP member and associate member countries have promoted diverse programmes, including publications, seminar forums, and training programmes with a purpose of poverty reduction, increase in educational opportunities, promotion of rehabilitation services, and capability building for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. In spite of such efforts, this is also true that many people with disabilities in the region still suffer exclusion from benefits of social development, such as education, medicals, information and communications, and decent jobs.

Today, this event will be a platform for us not only to celebrate all the endeavors and achievements that have been made over the past years, but to reflect on what we should have done but couldn't do, and to establish strategy for the way forward.

In this regard, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, let us recall the spirit of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities shall be promoted, protected, and ensured, and their inherent dignity shall be respected.

This year, the 2012 Paralympic Games was held in London, letting the world know that by no means disability can be barriers. Through the Paralympic Games, we were fully convinced that we shall make more efforts to create better social environments where messages of dreams and hope can be delivered for persons with disabilities, and where equal opportunities can be provided without discrimination

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let's remember the moment when we affirmed our determination through the adoption of the United Nations, and when we had one mind through the Paralympic Games to be convinced that we shall make a society where disability cannot be an obstacle. At the Paralympic Games, Dr. Stephen Hawking spoke that we should make a society where all persons with disabilities can look up at the stars, share the same human spirit as others, and create and develop their abilities.

All member and associate member countries, and participants present here today, I

would like to call upon all of you to join our efforts of the New Decade that aims to develop a society just like Dr. Stephen Hawking said.

Now, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all staff and officials of the UNESCAP secretariat for all your hard work to make today's meeting possible. Also, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Incheon City officials for supporting this event.

Lastly, I would like to recognize Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, who unfortunately could be here today, for her hard work and efforts to make this event possible. The government of the Republic of Korea promise that we will work together with ESCAP for making a fruitful outcome in adopting the Incheon Strategy.

Thank you very much.

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