**Social Forum**

**5 October 2016; 17:25-18:00**

Kate Gilmore, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Closing of the Human Rights Council’s Social Forum 2016**

Good afternoon everyone. And let me say at the outset what an honour it is to join you. I heard from the High Commissioner how much he appreciated the opportunity to be in dialogue with at the commencement of your important work and although indeed I am a very poor substitute, I nonetheless can assure that he sends you his equally warm greetings at the conclusion of important consideration of integrated holistic rights for us all and specifically for those of us living with disabilities.

 What I understand has been important in your exchanges perhaps can be summarized in three key points.

First and foremost the fact that we have different and courageous advocates with us who are amongst the bravest mental teachers and inspirers of the international human rights system, as it struggles to be relevant. And the fact that we have those people with us, the form of people who are advocates and determined inspirers, the fact that you are in this room in this chamber brought together is a matter of great moment for the Human Rights Council for the office of the High Commissioner, indeed for Human Rights globally.

It matters enormously that we move beyond abstract expertise even as we notice that we need more research, more understanding and better knowledge management with respect to the lived experience of people living with disabilities; even though that expertise is essential it cannot be trusted on its own unless it is within robust dialogue with those who know well what it means to have their rights ignored or dismissed.

The presence of advocates is not important; it is essential. In addition to the knowledge management question, essential issue, if we are to consider human rights indivisible not only universal, then there can be no sector of society left out as we embrace the struggle to leave no one behind. And that's inclusive therefore, of course, of Member States, of Governments and statutory authorities, authorities convened under constitutional weight, to take due protection of citizens and Parliaments. That is not enough. It must critically include an empowerment of civil society to hold accountable the duty barrier whose responsibilities are inclusive of respecting, protecting and upholding the rights of people with disabilities, but extend to nonstate actors.

And here are two important messages that you have been exploring and we want to echo from elsewhere, on the one hand the private sector and business of enterprise. The business of business is an enormously influential actor potentially for enhancing the dignity of people with disabilities, not only to employment but to innovation, through the provision of services and platforms for leadership, for participation and contribution.

But on the other hand, in the context of humanitarian crises and conflict as the World Humanitarian Summit made clear emphatically this year, the failure to recognize state and nonstate actors in the context of crisis, contagion is a failure of our duties to people with disabilities. So knowledge management, yes, but we need a more comprehensive engagement if we are to genuinely secure human dignity for all and all parts of society must be involved.

We must make the invitation to uphold this important journey to the realization of Human Rights. We must make that invitation more broad and easy to take up and more influential in terms of the fruit that can be harvested for those who currently find it most difficult to exercise and access rights including people with disabilities.

But the third thing that I think you have touched on very powerfully, and I must say this matters a lot for the Council, you know, your human rights are very a “hearts and minds” project. We are in the United Nations and rightly we are here bound by law, by rules of procedure and we are in many ways a servant of Member States who have the authority determine strategic direction. This is the minds part of the project. But if, after your conversation such as we have had this week, if by any chance your eyes are still dry and your heart is still still and your spirit is no way moved and not uplifted, something terribly wrong has happened.

If you can sit, I am speaking as much to myself and colleagues as anybody in this chamber, if any of us can sit and examine the human consequence of those subjected to misunderstanding, to intolerance, to bigotry, the deprivation of talent that is the casualty, if we can sit here, then we have missed the whole point. Behind the disguise of our self assumption, whether it is based on colorless scheme behind all that lies a great and essential truth upheld in every great religious and cultural tradition and that's the preciousness of human life and entitlement to human dignity for us all and that, that is a heart project. That is not a mind project. Even under public policy it is pragmatisms to deny a project, let it be very clear, let it be very, very clear to us, there may be many explanations there are no excuses. There are no excuses from not upholding intact, universally to the exclusion of none of us without the inclusion of all of us, the human dignity of people who otherwise are considered to be living with disabilities.

And I thank you very much for the illumination that you provided to that and we hope that we are worthy of the trust that you have invested in us as you provided port to the Human Rights Council and the Office of High Commissioner.