**Social Forum**

**3 October 2016; 10:00**

Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Opening Statement**

Chairpersons,

Excellences,

Colleagues and Friends,

It is an honour for me to open the Social Forum of the Human Rights Council, and I welcome the Council’s decision to focus this year on the rights of persons with disabilities.

My Office and I are committed to advancing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in global, regional and national contexts, by supporting all stakeholders, particularly States, to adopt the human rights-based approach to disability.

That approach is clearly laid out in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and I am particularly glad that we have this opportunity to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of this ground-breaking instrument.

We have come a long way in this past decade, thanks in large part to the broad community of persons with disabilities, working under the motto “Nothing about us without us”. The rights of persons with disabilities have become a priority in the human rights agenda. We have improved monitoring processes for the rights of persons with disabilities within the UPR, as well as across all activities of the Council in general and in the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Since 2006, 166 States have ratified the Convention – an important indication of the global consensus that much more needs to be done to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, and of national commitments to push forward with that work.

I'd like to pay tribute to the contributions of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It has powered some tremendous advances – as symbolised by its membership. As many of you know, last June, for the first time, States elected as experts a member with an intellectual impairment and a deaf member. I encourage States Parties to the Convention to continue this path, increasing impairment, gender and regional balance in the CRPD Committee.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development last year confirmed the strong engagement of all stakeholders on the rights of persons with disabilities. But although setting out the 2030 Agenda was essential, it was only the prelude to the real work of realisation. Having agreed on key goals at the international level, we must now implement them nationally and locally, in order to achieve the goal of leaving no one behind.

To assist, my Office is developing tools to enable sound policies to be drawn up, and their impact measured. We are open to working with all stakeholders to ensure that persons with disabilities become actors of inclusive development. I encourage you all to engage with my Office and to work together towards this goal.

During the World Humanitarian Summit in May, OHCHR endorsed the Charter on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. We committed to supporting the development of international guidelines on persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts with a human rights perspective, and we pledged to increase our efforts to monitor and report human rights violations against persons with disabilities in emergency situations. We have begun working to deliver on these sadly necessary commitments, which I hope will help to minimize the terrible harm that so many people suffer.

Promoting the human rights of all persons with disabilities is essential to the work of my Office. All of our divisions contribute to this work, in addition to our support for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Special Rapporteur on rights of persons with disabilities, and the Human Rights Council’s Task Force on accessibility. Our field offices in every region work to support ratification and implementation of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. I personally lead the global agenda, with the support of an Advisor on Human Rights and Disability. Persons with disabilities are a priority for us, and we will not leave them behind.

In the next few days, this Forum will look deeply at a range of important issues. I and my colleagues are eager to benefit from your analysis of areas of interest and priorities in the years to come. Ensuring that the 2030 Agenda is well implemented will be one essential area of work, but it will not be the only one. Across all our efforts, the key themes must continue to be equality and non-discrimination, empowerment and participation and accountability.

Your engagement will be fundamental to building a collective understanding of the challenges which lie ahead, and the ways in which we can build human rights frameworks to realise our goals. I very much encourage all of you to actively contribute to the next three days of discussions. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this Social Forum and to working with all of you in the planning and implementation of its outcomes.

I wish you a very fruitful meeting and constructive and interesting debates.

Thank you.