WHO Deputy Director General’s speech at Global Disability Summit
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park London, 24 July 2018

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

1 of every 7 people today lives with some form of disability, and the number is growing.

Whether in rich or poor societies, whether due to old age, an accident, acquired or by birth, no one with disability should be denied the right to health, education, livelihood, participation and inclusion.

A key enabler to achieving those rights is assistive technology. Assistive technology enables and empowers people to realize their full potential and to lead an independent and fulfilling life – it is a life-changing solution.

Today, more than 1 billion people need some form of assistive technology, but only one in 10 can access what they need.

The barriers to accessing assistive technology are numerous but are mainly due to lack of awareness and political commitment, and market failure.
That is why WHO’s work in recent years has prioritized assistive technology within its access to health products agenda:

- We have provided the world with the first ever List of Essential Assistive Products, a first step;
- In May this year, WHO’s 194 Member States committed to improving access to assistive technology through a unanimously endorsed resolution.

That resolution makes our determination to serve people living with disability, and to leave no one behind, even firmer and stronger.

WHO’s main priority under the SDG agenda is Universal Health Coverage, which means that everyone, no matter where they live, should have the health services they need, including high-quality rehabilitation services, without facing financial hardship. WHO and partners outlined the path for achieving this through last year’s Call for Action: Rehabilitation 2030. We are committed to making universal health coverage inclusive and responsive to the needs of people living with disability.

In order to measure progress towards the SDGs and UHC, timely and high-quality data are essential. Towards this end, WHO is implementing
the Model Disability Survey and building country capacity to generate and use data to design appropriate policies.

WHO will also give full and active support to the Global Partnership for Assistive Technology that was launched today. We understand its value, which is why we have been part of this journey from day one and will continue until we achieve our common goal.

Dear colleagues, we live in a connected world where nothing can happen in isolation. We congratulate the UK and Kenyan Governments and also the International Disability Alliance, for their leadership and initiative on disability, and look forward to working together with all the partners to ensure access to assistive technology for everyone, everywhere.

Thank you.