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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

**Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,  
Director-General of UNESCO**

**on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

**3 December 2017**

*“When you have a disability, knowing that you are not defined by it is the sweetest feeling” — Anne Wafula Strike, Paralympic Wheelchair Racer.*

This is the meaning of the *International Day of Persons with Disabilities*, to defend the human rights and dignity of every woman and man and empower them to become everything they wish, regardless of disabilities.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* promises to “leave no one behind” - - because development will not be sustainable if it is not inclusive, because progress has little meaning if it is not shared. The rights and concerns of persons with disabilities must stand at the heart of every effort to bolster the resilience of societies against the pressures of change and enable every woman and man to make the most of its opportunities.

Persons with disabilities are on the frontlines of a world changing quickly and societies transforming, and they are especially vulnerable to the impacts of humanitarian crises and environmental challenges. This cannot go on. We must integrate persons with disabilities into all decision-making and policies. We must do everything to take forward the 2015 *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, the 2016 *Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action*, as well as the *New Urban Agenda*, working with all Governments and partners, to empower persons with disabilities in all circumstances

UNESCO will continue acting across the board. This starts with inclusive education, leading the Education 2030 Framework, drawing on UNESCO’s *Guide for Ensuring*

*Inclusion and Equity in Education* to bolster educational systems that provide opportunity to all. This includes ensuring access to information for all, especially to harness the power of new information and communication technologies. This takes in also supporting the creativity and cultural rights of persons with disabilities, and ensuring their full participation in sports and physical education.

UNESCO's message is clear today. Building sustainable and resilient societies requires the inclusion, participation and empowerment of every woman and man, including persons with disabilities. This is about equal rights and dignity -- this is about the better future we seek to build for all.

Audrey Azoulay