I would like to thank the Executive Board of UNICEF for inviting the International Disability Alliance (IDA) to speak at this Special Focus Session on UNICEF’s work for children with disabilities. IDA welcomes the strong relationship of cooperation, consultation and coordination we share with UNICEF, and look forward to continuing this partnership in the future.

This year’s Special Focus Session is an important preparatory step in advance of the High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development later this month. UNICEF’s comprehensive report, released in May this year—“The State of the World’s Children 2013: Children with Disabilities”—highlighted the need to move from a history of exclusion, to a future of inclusion of children with disabilities in policies, local communities, and society as a whole.

With the Millennium Development Goals’ end date fast approaching, important steps on an international level are now being taken to ensure the mainstreaming of the rights and participation of persons with disabilities globally—but there is still much work to be done.

The mainstreaming of rights and participation of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda is crucial to ensuring a future that recognizes the importance of equal opportunity and inclusion for children with disabilities. Persons with disabilities experience barriers in accessing health, education, employment, and transportation and information services. Faced with minimal disability data collection and analysis capabilities further impedes the creation of practical and sustainable national and global policies.

For children, the impact of these barriers on their ability to actively engage in their communities and lead prosperous and full lives cannot be understated. The lack of data in particular limits our knowledge and the ability to ensure these barriers are broken down.

UNICEF and IDA continue to collaborate and engage in a number of processes in order to ensure the mainstreaming of the rights and participations of persons with disabilities in the post-2015 agenda. Among these initiatives include The Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities and the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities—which incorporates Member States, UN agencies and civil society—and aims to further collaboration and support, to ensure the realization of the rights and participation of persons with disabilities.

UNICEF and IDA also actively participate in the Open Group for the Sustainable Development Goals. We remain engaged in broader discussions at the United Nations in New York surrounding the post-2015 agenda, and will be actively engaged in events during and surrounding the September 23 High-Level Meeting.

Disabled persons’ organizations made our intent clear in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities—“Nothing About Us, Without Us”. IDA remains firmly
committed to continued and active engagement with Member States, UN Agencies and civil society in order to truly realize a world where the rights and participation of persons with disabilities becomes reality. Nothing less than a comprehensive and collaborative effort—by all of us—will ensure the achievement of this goal.

I look forward to the outcome of today’s discussion, which will contribute greatly to our advocacy efforts in the months ahead as we work to ensure the inclusion, rights and participation of children with disabilities.