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7th AFRICA FORUM ON VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 7 October 2019

THEME: “7TH AFRICA FORUM ON VISUAL IMPAIRMENT: ACHIEVING AU AGENDA 2063 AND THE SDGS THROUGH INNOVATION, ACCESS AND LIFELONG LEARNING”

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CONCEPT NOTE

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1. BACKGROUND

- a) The African Union recognition of issues of disability as a priority in the continent can be cited through the decision declaring the period 2010 – 2019 as the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. The Decade created opportunity to promote awareness raising, full participation, equality and empowerment of persons with disabilities, and putting disability on the social, economic and political agenda of African governments.
- b) Further, the African Union in 2013 through Executive Council (Decision EX.CL/Dec.750 (XXII), adopted a new framework (African Union Disability Architecture [AUDA]) to fulfil the realization and enjoyment of disability rights. The AUDA framework is composed of a Legal Pillar (the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, [AU Disability Protocol], officially adopted in 2018 and currently in its ratification process), a Programmatic Pillar (the Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities – CPOA [2010-2019], which shall be replaced with the just adopted AU Disability Strategic Framework, in 2020) and an Institutional Pillar (the Africa Union Disability Institute, [AUDI], a specialized technical agency on disability.
- c) The report of the 3rd African Union STC on Social Development, Labour And Employment held in Addis Ababa from 1-5 April 2019; and the 35th Ordinary Session of the Summit of the Africa Union Executive Council held from 4 – 5 July, 2019, in Niamay, adopted the Disability Strategic Framework, which in **Strategic Area 7** prioritizes: **Improving Access to Habilitation, Rehabilitation and Life-Changing Assistive Devices and Technologies**; while **Strategic Area 8** covers: **Enhancing Access to the Built and Virtual Environment, Transportation and Information and Communications Technologies**.
- d) The African Union master plan, the Agenda 2063, has a vision which aims for an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind. While the Social Policy Framework for Africa (SPF) provides encouragement to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States to accelerate their implementation through increased investment and budget allocation to the social sector (EX.CL/750 (XX) of January 2013). The Draft AU Social Agenda 2063, which shall be replacing the SPF, to be endorsed in December 2019 by Ministers of Social Development, Labour and Employment during their Extra-Ordinary STC, makes several references to disability and includes a sub-chapter on people with disabilities as being a target group when it comes to addressing vulnerability.
- e) The annual AU theme for 2019 is on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa; with efforts

to undertake a series of activities aimed at addressing the root causes and achieving solutions to forced displacement in Africa. The implementation of continental initiatives ties with the AU Disability Strategic Framework and United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), to create awareness and action.

- f) Acknowledging the need to share experiences, the 7th Africa Forum, a global conference which began in 1996, offers an exemplary platform for individuals and agencies to exchange ideas, share best practices and promote new assistive technologies in the field of visual impairment to improve the lives of persons with visual impairment in Africa; strengthen professional networking among governments, organizations, corporations and donor agencies in order to facilitate greater dissemination. Throughout its history, the forum has led to many reforms, inclusive education policies, development, advocacy and ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty, among others.

2. MAIN OBJECTIVES

- g) To bring governments, corporations, donor agencies, non-profit and disability organizations together to share best practices and promote new assistive technologies in the field of visual impairment, as well as facilitate the introduction of new trends, policies, models, approaches and interventions to persons with visual impairment in Africa.

3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The Forum will be a 5 days conference with meetings, plenary sessions, exhibitions, interest group meetings and workshops, all sessions conducted at the Elily Hotel. To kick start the conference, the African Union Commission shall host the Opening Ceremony at the AUC conference hall, on the 7th October, 2019.

- A communique to the African Union leading to the rights and participation of Persons with visual impairment and other persons with disabilities in the development of Africa's agenda 2063 will be submitted.
- Support for the ratification of the protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa will be concretized.
- Network pertaining to the realization of the full benefits of inclusive education with focus on 'no child left behind' will be strengthened
- Advanced digitization and technological agenda for the development of persons with disabilities in Africa will be promoted.

FORMAT OF THE OPENING CEREMONY

- h) The Forum Opening Ceremony will be hosted by Her Excellency the Commissioner for the Social Affairs with high profile guest and speakers from the

government of Ethiopia, African Region, and other international guests. The proposed programme is scheduled from 4pm – 7pm on the 7th October 2019 in the African Union Commission.

4. PARTICIPANTS

- i) Attending the Forum Opening Ceremony will be about 400 participants in the field of visual impairments. The participants will include government officials, continental Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displace Persons with disabilities, Disability Federations, universities, NGOs, Rehabilitation experts on disability and members of the diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa.

5. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

- j) The Department of Social Affairs in collaboration of the Forum's Local Organising Committee, will lead the coordination of the Opening Ceremony, and shall be responsible for joint preparation, administrative and logistical organisation, with other line Departments and Directorates.

6. BUDGET AND OTHER RESOURCES

- k) The Opening Ceremony for the 7th Africa Forum is a collaboration between the Africa Forum organizers and the related costs shall be paid by the organizers.

7. CONTACT PERSONS:

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