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**On The Occasion Of
The International Day Of Persons With Disabilities**

- 3RD DECEMBER 2025

Today, the African Union joins the global community in commemorating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities under the theme: **“Fostering Disability-Inclusive Societies for Advancing Social Progress.”** This day offers an important opportunity to reflect on achievements, confront structural challenges and renew our collective commitment to building an Africa where all persons, regardless of ability or location, fully enjoy their rights and contribute meaningfully to the continent’s socioeconomic, cultural and political development.

The African Union marks this occasion as part of its ongoing efforts to translate continental commitments into tangible results, particularly through advancing the **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa**. The effective promotion, ratification, domestication and implementation of this Protocol remain central to safeguarding dignity, strengthening accessibility and reinforcing legal and institutional protections for persons with disabilities across Member States.

Our resolve is further strengthened by the **Amman-Berlin Declaration (ABD)**, which underscores the collective responsibility for accelerated, coordinated and multisectoral action to dismantle systemic barriers, expand equitable access to essential services and ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities. The Declaration reaffirms that at least 15% of development projects globally must promote inclusion.

In advancing these continental and global priorities, the African Union continues to leverage strategic mechanisms such as the **Boosting the Rights of Individuals with Disabilities in Africa (BRIDGE Africa)** project, supported by the Government of Germany and jointly implemented with GIZ. This flagship initiative enhances Member States' and regional institutions' technical capacities, aligns national legislative and policy frameworks with continental and international norms, and strengthens evidence-driven programme design and delivery for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

Our overarching objective is clear: to dismantle the physical, social, economic, legislative and attitudinal barriers that restrict participation and limit opportunity. Addressing these barriers is not only a developmental priority, but also a moral and human rights imperative. An inclusive society benefits all, when everyone can participate, contribute and lead, the entire continent advances together and advances faster.

The African Union remains unwavering in its commitment to advancing disability rights and inclusion, deepening structured engagement with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), and supporting Member States to domesticate and integrate key continental instruments, including the Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, into national legal, policy and institutional frameworks.

As we commemorate this important day, I call upon African governments, civil society organisations, community leaders and development partners to deepen their engagement and scale up efforts towards fostering disability-inclusive societies. *Leaving no one behind must be more than a slogan; it must be a lived reality, creating sustainable opportunities for every individual to thrive, participate and confidently contribute to shaping **Africa's future**.*

“When everyone belongs, Africa thrives.”

Happy International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

I thank you.