Statement by His Excellency Mr. Ri Hung Sik, Head of Delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea at the High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asia and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. President,

Allow me first of all to congratulate you on your election as President of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asia and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

In the same vein, I hope that your able leadership will lead this meeting to a success.

Mr. President,

The countries in the region and the state parties to the Convention express deep interest in this meeting of the Mid-point Review of the Asia and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2013-2022) as it deliberates comprehensively on the relevant contents of the UN SDGs and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain the efforts of the Government of the DPRK for protection and promotion of human rights of the persons with disabilities.

The DPRK which adheres to the idea of giving first priority to the
popular masses as its guiding principle had stipulated protection and promotion of human rights of the people including the persons with disabilities in the Constitution from the first days of its founding and has taken national and social measures, steadily updating the laws and regulations for their implementation.

The relevant laws adopted in the DPRK including the Socialist Labour Law, Education Law, Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child, Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women, Law on Road Traffic, Criminal Law and Civil Law strictly stipulate the protection of the rights and convenience of the persons with disabilities.

In particular, measures were taken to ensure compulsory secondary education for the children with disabilities in accordance with the universal 12-year compulsory education and universal free medical care systems and the state takes responsible care of the free medical service and supply of prosthesis and orthopedic tools.

The DPRK adopted the Law on the Protection of the People with Disabilities in June 2003 in order to legally guarantee the rights of the people with disabilities more thoroughly and establish a unified national guidance system for their protection and has set June 18, the day of the adoption of this law, as the Day of the Persons with Disabilities. It also organized the National Committee for Protection of the Persons with Disabilities and the specialized medical institution for them.
The DPRK attaches importance to the implementation of the international conventions and international cooperation in protecting and promoting the rights of the persons with disabilities. Proceeding therefrom, it signed the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities in July 2013 and ratified it in November 2016 following amendment and supplement of the law as required by the Convention.

The amended and supplemented law provided for establishing the production and supply system of the accessory tools for the persons with disabilities and observing the principle of accommodating their convenience in the design and construction of the public buildings and dwelling houses, thus ensuring the measures in place to fully satisfy all elements related to the protection of the rights of the persons with disabilities in accordance with the requirement of the Convention.

At present, our country is in the initial stage in the implementation of the Convention and we have still much work to do to meet the requirement of the Convention to the full.

It is an urgent issue above anything else to provide environment and condition for us to concentrate all our efforts on the peaceful economic construction to improve the people's livelihood if we are to take active part in the activities in the Asia and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities and to fully implement the human rights instruments including the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities.

Now in our country all-people drive is in full swing to successfully
carry out the 5-year strategy for national economic development from 2016 to 2020 under the wise leadership of the Supreme Leader Comrade KIM JONG UN, Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the DPRK.

The plan of the 5-year strategy is aimed at laying foundation for sustainable economic development and decisively improving the people’s livelihood. Once it is implemented, great advancement will be made in our activities for the Asia and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities and in the implementation of the human rights conventions.

However, our effort for this peaceful economic construction is faced with serious challenges.

The most serious of all is the ferocious racket of sanctions and pressure against the DPRK led by the United States.

The sanctions imposed by the United States and its followers obstruct the enjoyment of human rights of our people in every way and encroach deep into the fields of activities for the protection of the persons with disabilities.

Some countries under the strenuous pressure of the United States stopped the delivery of the medical equipment and medicines for the maternal and infant health to our country and create indiscriminate difficulties even for the production of equipment, prosthesis and orthopedic tools for the persons with disabilities and the purchase of teaching aids and furnishings.
The vicious sanctions find their clear expressions in the fact that they prevented our officials of the Sports Association of the Persons with Disabilities from attending international sports conference in recent months and hinder and restrict in all ways even the cooperation activities conducted by humanitarian organizations with the Federation of the Persons with Disabilities of the DPRK.

Mr. President,

We hold that the inhuman sanctions of all sorts that trample down on the humanitarian ideals and the principles of international human rights instruments cannot be justified with anything and they should be put to an end immediately and unconditionally.

We also reject politicization, selectivity and double standards in human rights are also resolutely opposed to any attempt to use the human rights issues in ulterior political purposes.

However, proceeding from our consistent stand to attach importance to the dialogue and cooperation for protection and promotion of genuine human rights in the international human rights field, we will actively join the countries in the Asia and Pacific in their efforts to realize the issues for protection of the rights of the persons with disabilities to be deliberated at this meeting.

The Government of the DPRK will further strengthen exchanges and cooperation with international organizations including ESCAP and other countries in the region and fulfill its obligations in implementing the
declaration and the plan of action for the Decade to be adopted at the meeting.

Thank you.