

March 30, 2025 — Commemorating the 18th Anniversary of the UN CRPD: A Call to Nominate Members of the UN 8th Session Ad Hoc Committee for the Nobel Peace Prize Ahead of the CRPD’s 20th Anniversary (December 13, 2026)

By Voice of the Voiceless for Persons with Disabilities and Diverse Health Initiative



PHOTOS: Her Excellency Ambassador Joy U. Ogwu, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs as Chair, who represented the UN Secretary General and over 1.3 billion Persons with Disabilities Globally, during the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Signature Signing Ceremony at the UN General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, Hew York, on March 30, 2006. Others sitting with her are the Staff of the Office of the UN Secretary General and UN DESA

Introduction

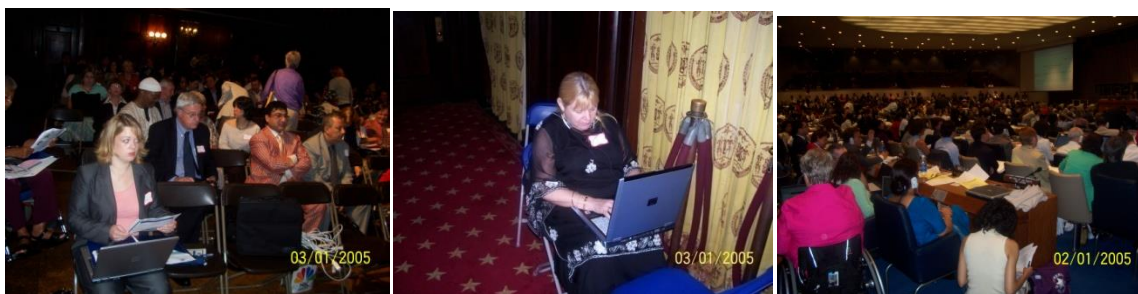
30th March 2025 marked the 18th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), which was opened for signatures at the UN Headquarters in New York. It is with great pride that we acknowledge Nigeria’s role in signing this landmark human rights treaty and its Accompanying Optional Protocol under the leadership of then-President Olusegun through his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Her Excellency Ambassador Prof. Joy U. Ogwu, and on September 24, President Goodluck Jonathan through the same Prof Joy U. Ogwu as the Permanent Repetitive, Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations and His Excellency Henry Odein Ajumogobia, Minister of Foreign Affairs ratified it.

While commemorating the 18th Anniversary of the UN CRPD Signature Signing Ceremony, it is worth appreciating and letting our Nigerians and the World know the remarkable role that was played out on that day, being March 30, 2007, at the UN General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, New York. By stroke of divinity, Her Excellency, Prof Joy U. Ogwu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, was the one who chaired the World’s UN Member States CRPD Signature Signing ceremony. We the Pioneers of Nigeria’s National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and Policy Changer Advocates remained grateful that this was done in

attendance by our leaders notably; Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom, President, and Lady Dorothy (Doi) Mbanefo, Public Relations Officer of *Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International, Inc.* (ERPWDI), also known as *Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Initiative*.

In this publication, the remaining parts will present an appreciation of the national and global pioneers and advocates who negotiated with the UN member states to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and the need for nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize award. Followed by the history of the making of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD). Subsequent sections will present the Struggle for the Implementation of the UN CRPD in Nigeria, the effect of non-implementation of the UN CRPD in Nigeria's Disability Community. It will end with a call for Action and Respect for Pioneers and a Conclusion.

Honouring Nigeria's National & Global Pioneers of Disability Advocacy



Member of the United Nations Eighth Sessions Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232], Chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Don McKay of New Zealand

On behalf of the Pioneers of Nigeria's National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and Policy Changers/Advocates/Activist/Educator (Ad Hoc Consortium), we extend our profound gratitude to the countless individuals -both with and without disabilities who contributed to the drafting, advocacy and negotiations with the UN Member States to successfully adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) on December 13, 2006. Unfortunately, many of these selfless advocates have passed away, leaving behind great global historical achievements and legacies of courage and resilience, while those still alive are being neglected and excluded from disability programs. They remain an inspiration for their unwavering commitment and remarkable achievements.



Member of the United Nations Eighth Sessions Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232], Chaired by His Excellency Ambassador Don McKay of New Zealand

Call for Nobel Peace Prize Nomination for the Pioneers who Advocated and Negotiated with the UN Member States to Adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD): In Commemoration of its 20th Anniversary.

As the world prepares to mark the **20th Anniversary of the Adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on December 13, 2026**, we respectfully call upon the **International Disability Alliance (IDA)**, **UN DESA**, and the **Secretariat of the CRPD** to honor this historic milestone by **nominating all the pioneer members of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232] for the Nobel Peace Prize.**

These pioneers—visionary civil society leaders, legal experts, government representatives, and persons with disabilities—worked with extraordinary dedication and courage to shape the world’s first legally binding international human rights treaty of the 21st century focused exclusively on the dignity, inclusion, and rights of persons with disabilities. Their groundbreaking work led to the adoption of the CRPD by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, a treaty that has since been ratified by over 180 countries and is transforming lives around the globe.

The CRPD has become a global instrument of peace, inclusion, and justice, promoting not just the rights of over 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide but also strengthening democratic governance, participatory development, and the rule of law in every region.

Awarding the **Nobel Peace Prize** to these trailblazers would not only honour their monumental contribution to human rights and global peace, but it would also:

- **Preserve and highlight the legacy** of these iconic disability rights champions.
- **Inspire a new generation** of disability civil rights advocates, educators, and policymakers across the globe.
- Serve as a global recognition that **disability rights are human rights**, and that peace cannot be achieved without justice and inclusion for all.

Let this 20th anniversary be a moment of reflection, recognition, and renewal—a time to uplift those who laid the foundation for a more inclusive and just world.



L-R: Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom and Lady Dorothy (Doi) Mbanefo Nigeria’s national and Global Disability Iconic legendary Heroes and Great man and woman of Distinction at the United Nations Headquarters, New York as the only two Nigeria’s Official Delegates to the United Nations and a members of the Rehabilitation International (RI-Global), Disabled Peoples International (DPI), United States Civil Society Delegate to the UN, International Disability Alliance (IDA) and its defunct International Disability Caucus members of the UN Eighth Sessions Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232], who represented more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide, including over 35.5 million Nigerians and 70 million Americans

The Nigerian Pioneers who joined in advocating and negotiating with the UN Member States to adopt the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)

In achieving this giant strike, we recognize and appreciate the invaluable efforts of our National and Global Iconic Legendary Heroes, great man and woman of Distinction, Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom, President, and Lady Dorothy (Doi) Mbanefo, Public Relations Officer of *Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International, Inc.* (ERPWDI), also known as *Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Initiative*. These two outstanding Nigerians with disabilities were the only individuals from Nigeria who successfully advocated for and negotiated the nation's involvement in this historic global milestone. Their tireless work brought lasting national and international legacies for Nigeria, most notably for her 35.5 million persons with disabilities, a political constituency of consequence.



Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom, at the UN Headquarters New York, as a Nigeria’s Official Delegate to the United Nations and a member of the Rehabilitation International (RI-Global), Disabled Peoples International (DPI), United States Civil Society Delegate to the UN, International Disability Alliance (IDA) and its defunct International Disability Caucus members of the UN Eighth Sessions Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232], who represented more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide, including over 35.5 million Nigerians and 70 million Americans

Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom is widely regarded as the Godfather of Nigeria’s national and global Disability Civil Rights Movement. An iconic, legendary and Hero and great Man of Distinction. He is the driving force behind the Pioneers of Nigeria’s National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and has played a vital role as a National and Global Disability Policy Changes Advocate, helping to shape and push forward inclusive policies that empower people with disabilities.



PHOTO L-R: Two Nigeria’s Iconic Legendary Heroes and Great Women of Distinctions who Championed the Disability Civil Rights Movement in Nigeria, Late Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku, Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, who in collaborations with Kpakpando Foundation led by the Distinguished Senator Osita Izunaso and Director General, Mrs, Patricia Ovuoke Oseh, directly championed those High-Level Meetings with our Nigeria’s 8th National Assembly’s Senate and House of Representatives, Attorney General of the Federation, Head of the Civil Service of the Federation and 9th National Assembly’s Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives, which led to the Vote and passage in to Law, Nigerians with Disabilities Act, 2018, its Signing into law, the establishment of both National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and House Standing Commission for Persons with Disabilities

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the members of the Pioneers of Nigeria’s National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement—an ad hoc consortium of activists, advocates, and educators—led by a great woman of distinction and the Godmother of Nigeria’s Disability Civil Rights, Lady Omotunde Ellen Thomson. She

is the co-founder and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD). We also fondly remember and honour another remarkable woman of distinction, the late Mrs. Ngozi Pauline Ikebuaku.

Together, these visionary leaders played a pivotal role in championing the advocacy and negotiations that led to the enactment of the *Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018*, by the 8th National Assembly. Their tireless efforts contributed to the successful passage of the bill by both the Senate and the House of Representatives, its landmark signing into law by President Muhammadu Buhari, and the subsequent establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) and the House Standing Committee on Disability Matters.

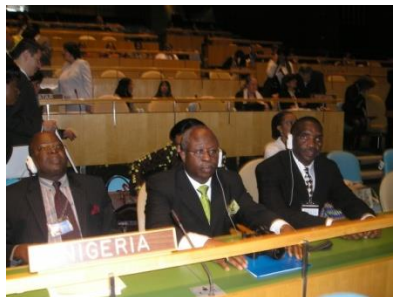


PHOTO L-R: Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom, His Excellency Ambassador Aminu Bashiru Wali, Lady Dorothy Mbanefo, His Excellency Ambassador Chijioke Wigwe, at the Headquarters of Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations on August 21, 2006, during their final High-Level Diplomatic Negotiating for Nigeria to join other UN Member States in adopting the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on December 13, 2006, sign and ratify it with its accompanying Optional Protocol

Moreover, we express our heartfelt gratitude to key Nigerian diplomats who played pivotal roles in this journey. We thank His Excellency Ambassador Aminu Bashir Wali, former Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations and former Minister of Foreign Affairs; His Excellency Ambassador Obi Okoye, Former Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Nigeria; and His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Chijioke Wigwe, for their exemplary leadership and diplomatic contributions that ensured Nigeria's successful signing and ratification of the UN CRPD and its Optional Protocol.

Together, these individuals represent the spirit of unity, advocacy, and persistence that continues to shape a more inclusive and equitable Nigeria for all. It's unfortunate that some of these leaders, some of them who are persons with disabilities, are been

excluded, lampooned, persecuted and retaliated against because of their uncompromising attitudes and seeking equality, justice and transparency for all others who are not privileged to speak out for themselves.



PHOTOS L-R: His Excellency Ambassador Obi Okoye, His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Chijioko Wigwe, Chief Eric Ndubuerze Ufom, inside the UN General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, New York, where they directly represented over 1.3 billion Persons with Disabilities Worldwide, including the Federal Republic of Nigeria and her 35.5 million Nigerians with Disabilities during the historic UN CRPD signing ceremony

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a legally binding international instrument designed to promote and protect the rights and human dignity of more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide, including over 35.5 million Nigerians. By signing, Nigeria affirmed its commitment to human rights, inclusivity, and social justice, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 2030 Agenda, adopted by the UN Member States on September 24, 2015 and establishing a framework for national legal and policy reforms.



L-R: His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Chijioko Wigwe, His Excellency Ambassador Obi Okoye and Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom, as the only Nigeria's Person with Disability official Delegate to the United Nations, on behalf of Federal Government of Nigeria and over 35.5 Million Nigerians with Disabilities, witnessed Her Excellency Ambassador Professor Joy U. Ogwu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its accompanying Optional Protocol, inside the UN General Assembly Hall, UN Headquarters, New York, on March 30, 2007

The Making of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD),

The adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), on December 13, 2006, by the UN Member States was a global historic achievement and legacy milestone in the global fight for disability rights, which deserved and earned the rights to be nominated to win a Nobel Peace Prize. This is the time to do the needful by completing the nomination on or before December 13, 2026, the Twentieth Anniversary. The journey began with General Assembly Resolution 56/168, passed on December 19, 2001, which established the Eighth Session's Ad Hoc Committee to draft a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. This effort was based on a holistic approach considering social development, human rights, and non-discrimination, incorporating recommendations from the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission for Social Development. His Excellency Ambassador Don McKay was the Chair of that very Successful, UN Eighth Sessions Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232].



PHOTOS L-R: His Excellency Ambassador Don McKay of New Zealand, Chair UN 8th Sessions Ad Hoc Committee, Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom and Lady Dorothy (Doi) Mbanefo, on January 2-3, 2005, during New York very cold Winter Days with huge Snow at the UN Headquarters, New York and Rehabilitation International (RI-Global) Event, as Nigeria's Official Delegates to the United Nations and a members of the Rehabilitation International (RI-Global), Disabled Peoples International (DPI), United States Civil Society Delegate to the UN, International Disability Alliance (IDA) and its defunct International Disability Caucus members of the UN Eighth Sessions Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232], who represented more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide, including over 35.5 million Nigerians and 70 million Americans

The Work of the Ad Hoc Committee

- The First Session of the Ad Hoc Committee took place from July 29 to August 9, 2002, gathering input from states, UN bodies, and disability-focused organisations.
- The Second Session (June 16-27, 2003) led to the creation of a Working Group tasked with drafting a convention text.
- The Working Group, including representatives of member states, NGOs, and human rights institutions, met from January 5-16, 2004, to develop a draft.
- By General Assembly Resolution 58/246, negotiations began at the Third Session (May 24 - June 4, 2004), based on the Working Group's draft.
- The Committee completed two readings of the draft convention during its Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Sessions (2004-2005).
- During the Seventh Session (January 16 - February 3, 2006), the Ad Hoc Committee reviewed a consolidated draft.
- At the Eighth Session (August 14-25, 2006), the final draft text of the Convention, including an Optional Protocol, was adopted without a vote. The Committee established a Drafting Group to ensure uniform terminology and harmonisation across UN languages.
- On December 5, 2006, the Chairman of the Drafting Group presented the final report, and the Committee forwarded the draft Convention and Optional Protocol to the UN General Assembly.
- On December 13, 2006, the General Assembly adopted the CRPD and Optional Protocol by consensus.
- The Convention opened for signature on March 30, 2007, at the UN Headquarters in New York, with 82 signatories—the highest number in UN history for a convention on its opening day.
- The CRPD entered into force on May 3, 2008.

The significance of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) as a 21st-century human rights treaty lies in its unprecedented unification of global disability rights leaders and stakeholders. Spearheaded by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), an International Disability Caucus (IDC) was formed to lead the global advocacy and negotiations with UN Member States. These efforts culminated in the historic adoption of the UN CRPD on December 13, 2006.

As we commemorate the 18th anniversary of Nigeria's signing of the UN CRPD, we also commend the IDA for its unwavering dedication to the full protection and promotion of the human rights of more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities worldwide, including over 35.5 million Nigerians. Through its strategic use of the UN CRPD and other human rights instruments, the IDA has helped to secure historic global progress and visibility for disability rights. These achievements, well-documented and recognized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), merit consideration for a Nobel Peace Prize in honour of the 20th Anniversary of the UN CRPD.

Regrettably, despite being the most populous Black Nation with persons with disabilities, Nigeria was underrepresented during the United Nations' Eighth Session of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities [A/RES/60/232]. Out of an estimated more than 27 million Nigerians with disabilities, only two individuals represented the country, both as part of the official delegation and civil society. These pioneering figures were Chief Eric Ndubueze Ufom, President, and Lady Dorothy (Doi) Mbanefo, PRO of Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities International, Inc. (ERPWDI), also known as Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities Initiative.

The Struggle for the Implementation of the UN CRPD in Nigeria

Despite signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) on March 30, 2007, and September 24, 2010, respectively, Nigeria has yet to fully implement this vital human rights treaty of the 21st century—particularly Article 4, which outlines general obligations for states parties. As the United Nations rightly affirms, *“The UN CRPD is not a favour to persons with disabilities; it is an obligation that governments must uphold in law and practice.”* In the same vein, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan aptly stated, *“Signing a treaty is an announcement of intention; implementing it is the test of commitment.”* Unfortunately, Nigeria's persistent failure to implement the treaty has resulted in untold hardships for its over 35.5 million persons with disabilities.

Several deeply rooted challenges contribute to Nigeria's struggle in implementing the UN CRPD. These include a widespread lack of understanding of disability issues among government officials, misinformation and misrepresentation within the disability community, low public awareness, and a general perception of disability as

a charity issue rather than a matter of human rights. These problems are compounded by the ineptitude of both the legislative and executive arms of government, which often fail to appreciate that disability rights are backed by binding international obligations.

One major obstacle is the lack of comprehension among the legislative, executive, and judicial arms of government regarding the intrinsic link between disability, persons with disabilities, and national insecurity. This misunderstanding undermines the prioritisation of disability-inclusive policies and leaves critical gaps in national development efforts.

Another constitutional barrier is Section 12 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which stipulates those international treaties must be domesticated through legislation by the National Assembly to have the force of law. Although the National Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act was eventually passed in 2018, over a decade after the UN CRPD was ratified, the delay and lack of rigorous enforcement demonstrate ongoing systemic reluctance.

Compounding these issues is the troubling role played by some leaders within the disability community. Misinformation, disunity, and exclusion are rampant, largely because many of these leaders were not part of the legislative processes that birthed the disability laws. Rather than seeking knowledge from the pioneers who were involved, some resort to marginalising, persecuting, and excluding them from critical programs and activities. This divisive behaviour has led to distorted advocacy and disjointed representation, further stalling effective implementation.

A toxic culture of impunity and internal power struggles has also taken root within the Nigerian disability community. Instead of fostering unity and progress, many factions have formed cartels aimed at suppressing truth and accountability. Corruption, bribery, a lack of transparency, and the politicisation of disability issues have become normalised. These harmful practices have not only stifled the implementation of the UN CRPD but have also undermined the effective enforcement of the 2018 Disability Act.

Additionally, the role of international donors in Nigeria has not always been constructive. Many donor agencies sponsor programs that are poorly designed, non-inclusive, or misaligned with the needs of grassroots persons with disabilities. Funds are often channelled to organisations led by individuals with personal connections,

without adequate due diligence on the organisation's past activities, reach, or impact, particularly in remote and underserved areas. This creates an environment where organisations compete aggressively for donor attention, sometimes resorting to bribery, fabrication of reports, and character assassination. Consequently, some leaders of persons with disabilities have amassed donor funds while contributing little to actual development, further fracturing the community and breeding distrust.

This troubling donor environment has inadvertently fostered Nigeria's ongoing insecurity, terrorism, kidnapping, bandits, irreconcilable community disputes, food insecurity, historical traumas, and its PTSD, toxic, stressful and deadly environment—undermining the spirit and objectives of the UN CRPD. What should be a collaborative, empowering process has become, in many cases, a race for resources rather than rights.

Finally, the legislative arm of government, which is constitutionally empowered to provide oversight and fiduciary checks, has often turned a blind eye to critical issues. In some cases, members of the legislature have colluded with a few unscrupulous disability leaders to obstruct meaningful progress. This failure to carry out oversight duties effectively has further delayed the full implementation of the UN CRPD.

In conclusion, while Nigeria has made some strides, such as enacting the Disability Act of 2018, the true test lies in effective implementation. Achieving this requires coordinated efforts to dismantle systemic barriers, correct misinformation, build inclusive leadership, and hold all stakeholders—government, civil society, and donors—accountable to the rights enshrined in the UN CRPD. Only then can the promise of dignity, inclusion, and equality for persons with disabilities in Nigeria be fulfilled.

Effect of the non-implementation of the UN CRPD in Nigeria's Disability Community

Because of no implementation of the UN CRPD in Nigeria, the disability community has been embroiled in a crucible of crisis, abuses, and undermined by the government in the appointment and death of many PWDS.

Since the UN CRPD has not been domesticated, it remains ineffective in ensuring legal protections for persons with disabilities. As a result, PWDS in Nigeria continue to experience:

- Barriers to accessing buildings, transportation, and information.
- Denial of the right to inclusive education.
- Workplace discrimination and lack of reasonable accommodations.
- Limited access to healthcare services.
- Exclusion from political participation and decision-making.
- Inadequate legal protections from violence, abuse, and exploitation.
- Systemic discrimination in social, economic, and cultural spheres.

The failure to domesticate the UN CRPD has exacerbated divisions within Nigeria’s disability rights community, fostering infighting, impunity, and leadership conflicts. A key victim of this turmoil is Lady Omotunde Ellen Thompson, co-founder and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD-Nigeria), who is a great woman of distinction, but just because she is a woman whose leadership brought more success stories than her male counterparts. For steadfastly advocating for transparency, accountability, and adherence to the association’s 2008 constitution, she has faced psychological abuse and torture, persecution, dehumanisation, repression, intimidation, frivolous court actions marked with misinformation and lies against her and exclusion from key decision-making processes.

A landmark court ruling on September 25, 2023, by Justice Emmanuel Ayade of the Calabar High Court declared the so-called *2014 revised constitution* of JONAPWD as a “*worthless piece of paper.*” Despite this ruling, a particular donor agency had previously funded amendments to this fraudulent constitution, further fueling discord within the disability community.

The unethical practices within JONAPWD and other disability organisations, driven by self-interest and financial mismanagement, threaten the future of disability advocacy in Nigeria. A concerning trend is the mentorship of emerging disability leaders in corrupt practices rather than ethical governance, jeopardising the credibility and effectiveness of the movement.

Due to the lack of implementation of the UN CRPD in Nigeria, persons with disabilities have continued to suffer severe consequences. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many persons with disabilities lost their lives, and even today, many more continue to die—especially in rural communities—because they are consistently excluded from government post-COVID-19 economic recovery programs.

The Flaws of Nigeria’s 2018 Disability Act

The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 is another testament to Nigeria’s weak commitment to disability rights. The Act is riddled with constitutional defects and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. The monetary penalties for violations are insufficient to deter discrimination, rendering the law ineffective. Consequently, Nigeria’s disability community continues to face systemic exclusion and inequality.

A Call for Action and Respect for Pioneers

The exclusion of Nigeria’s pioneering disability rights leaders from key policy decisions has contributed to these failures. Many of these trailblazers, who fought for the rights enshrined in the UN CRPD, remain active and should be consulted in shaping the future of disability legislation and advocacy in Nigeria.

As we commemorate this 18th anniversary, we call on the Nigerian government to:

1. Domesticate the UN CRPD by enacting it into national law in line with Section 12 of the 1999 Constitution.
2. Strengthen the implementation of the 2018 Disability Act by amending the Act to align with the spirit of the UN CRPD.
3. Ensure inclusive governance by involving credible, committed and trainable disability rights leaders in leadership positions, policy formulation and decision-making.
4. It is imperative to address the widespread corruption and mismanagement within disability organisations in Nigeria and ensure that those responsible are held accountable. This includes conducting thorough investigations into allegations of corrupt practices by certain individuals with disabilities who have held positions of authority.

One such case that demands scrutiny is that of **Chike Churchill Okogwu**, also known as “**The Lion of Ibusa**,” regarding his alleged involvement in the **Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Program (SURE-P)** and the mismanagement of funds intended for persons with disabilities under that initiative.

Another case involves **Lady Ekaete Judith Umo**, concerning the alleged diversion or misappropriation of campaign funds that were specifically meant

to support the participation of persons with disabilities during the presidential campaign of former President Goodluck Jonathan.

More recently, serious concerns have been raised about the tenure of **James David Lalu**, the former Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD). His leadership was reportedly marked by reckless spending, a lack of adherence to due process, acts of corruption, and the victimisation of persons with disabilities who dared to question or demand accountability.

While serving as the Executive Secretary of the Plateau State Disability Commission, all financial records under his administration were reportedly destroyed. Upon his appointment to the national commission, he allegedly continued this pattern by obstructing financial audits and fostering a culture of impunity.

To restore trust and ensure transparency within disability governance structures, these matters must be investigated by independent bodies, and appropriate legal and institutional actions must be taken to hold all those involved accountable. This is critical for the integrity of the disability movement in Nigeria and for ensuring that resources meant to empower persons with disabilities are used effectively and justly.

Despite repeated calls by the leaders of the Pioneers of Nigeria's National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and Policy Changer Advocates for an independent audit, the NCPWD has yet to be audited. Instead of promoting transparency and inclusion, key leaders such as **Chief Eric Ndubuisi Ufom**- President and founder of Equal Rights for Persons with Disability International Inc., and **Lady Omotunde Ellen Thomson**, Co-founder and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disability (JONAPWD-National, the registered umbrella body of PWDS) have been unjustly excluded from disability-related programs and activities, often labelled as troublemakers for speaking out.

5. Empower persons with disabilities through access to education, employment, healthcare, and political participation.

Nigeria's disability rights movement stands at a crossroads. Without urgent action, the aspirations enshrined in the UN CRPD will remain unfulfilled. It is time to transform promises into tangible progress, ensuring that persons with disabilities in Nigeria enjoy the dignity, rights, and opportunities they deserve.

The Pioneers' Commitment to Mark the 18th Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

We, the Pioneers of Nigeria's National and International Disability Civil Rights Movement and Policy Changer Advocates, hereby affirm our unwavering dedication to disability rights by making the following solemn commitments:

1. Upholding the UN CRPD:

We will continue to advocate for and uphold the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as a legally binding international treaty that promotes and protects the rights and dignity of more than 1.3 billion persons with disabilities globally, including over 35.5 million Nigerians.

2. Constitutional Inclusion:

We will persistently advocate for the amendment of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to explicitly recognize and include disability and persons with disabilities as a protected category.

3. Amending the Disability Act (2018):

We will continue to demand the amendment of the *National Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, 2018*, which we have identified as defective and unconstitutional. It must be aligned with the principles of the UN CRPD, which Nigeria signed on March 30, 2007, and ratified on September 24, 2010.

4. Fighting Corruption and Promoting Accountability:

We will advocate for transparency and accountability in Nigeria's disability ecosystem. Disability leaders found to be corrupt must be held accountable under the law and should not be shielded by their disability status or political alliances.

5. Honouring the Founding Pioneers:

We will continue to advocate for the recognition, respect, and equitable inclusion of the early pioneers who led the advocacy and negotiations that resulted in Nigeria signing and ratifying the UN CRPD and its Optional Protocols, passing the 2018 Disability Act, establishing the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), and creating the House

Standing Committee on Disability Matters. These pioneers deserve their rightful recognition and share of inclusion in ongoing disability affairs.

6. Accountability of Donors and Partners:

We are committed to ensuring that international donors and development partners play a constructive role in Nigeria. We urge them to stop sponsoring disability programs that are poorly designed, non-inclusive, or disconnected from the actual needs of grassroots persons with disabilities. Funds must no longer be allocated based on personal connections or political patronage but through transparent processes that consider an organization’s track record, reach, and impact, especially in underserved communities.

7. Disability Awareness and Capacity Building:

We commit to advocating for comprehensive training across all sectors—government agencies, private sector leaders, religious and traditional authorities, local government officials, and disability communities—on disability laws, rights, psychosocial and behavioural patterns, and specific health challenges such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Post-Polio Syndrome.

8. STEM Education for Inclusion and National Security:

We will continue to raise awareness and advocate for grassroots, community-based, and participatory STEM education as a key strategy to productively engage marginalized groups—including Almajiris, street children (Scholumbus), area boys, militants, and illegal miners—to prevent their recruitment into terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, and illegal mining. This approach promotes national peace, economic inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

9. Inclusive Peacebuilding and ICT-Driven Development:

We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the full and inclusive participation of persons with disabilities in all peacebuilding initiatives and ICT-driven development programs, including high-profile efforts such as the *Africa Timbuktoo* initiative and similar transformative agendas.

10. Restructuring and Strengthening JONAPWD:

We are committed to advocating for the restructuring of the *Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD–National)*—the legally registered umbrella body of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. We insist that the Association’s Board of Trustees (BoT), especially Lady Omotunde Ellen Thomson, Co-founder and Chairperson, be allowed to perform their statutory duties without intimidation, interference, or marginalization.

These commitments are made in the spirit of justice, inclusion, and in honour of the global and national legacies achieved under the UN CRPD. We stand united in purpose and action.

Conclusion

The UN CRPD symbolises a global commitment to disability rights, but its true impact depends on effective implementation. Nigeria must rise to the occasion and fulfil its obligations, not just in words but in action. The pioneers of Nigeria's disability movement have laid the foundation—now, it is time to build upon it with unwavering commitment and integrity.

Let this anniversary be a call to action for genuine inclusivity, justice, and equality for all persons with disabilities in Nigeria as we look up to its 20th anniversary.

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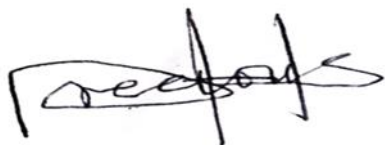
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