#### **Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum message**

#### **to delegates at CHOGM, Kigali 2022**

Greetings from the Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum [a Commonwealth Accredited Organisation] representing more than 450 million disabled people in the 54 countries of the Commonwealth. [Membership in 48 Commonwealth Countries with 94 member organisation DPOs, 45 of who are national umbrella DPOs]. Check our website [www.commonwealthdpf.org](http://www.commonwealthdpf.org)

**CDPF understands that disability is socially created as disabled people have physical, mental, sensory and psycho-social and other long term impairments that in interaction with attitudinal, environmental and organisational barriers disable them.**

**Our priority is to get sufficient funding for DPOs/OPDs to function**. We need to represent the views and voices of the diversity of disabled people to their Governments across the Commonwealth, in line with Article 4.3 and 33.3 of the Convention. It is the CDPF’s view, after a survey of our member organisations that DPOs need long-term core funding and that the Governments who have ratified the Convention represented at CHOGM should be providing and not relying on NGO and International Doners to fund them, with largely project based funding. To make progress with implementing Disability Rights and the UNCRPD, DPOs/OPDs need long-term core support to function and develop the democratic structures and build capacity for disabled people to work with their Governments to bring this about. Governments must consider allocating a small proportion of their National Income for this purpose.

**COVID** has taught us all how inadequate our public health arrangements are, but it has disproportionately impacted on disabled people. The inadequacies of Government responses are in many areas of the Convention. Inadequacies of Welfare Support (Article 28), Work (Article 27), Health (Article 25), Education (Article 24) Emergencies (Article 11), The Right to Life (Article 10) and failures in Accessible messaging (Article 9) and overall a lack of equality in response (Article 5). Countries reverted to a ‘Medical Model‘ approach, viewing us as ‘vulnerable’ rather than ‘at greater risk’, which can be planned for and minimised. **We CDPF call on all State Parties present at GHOGM to re-double their efforts to include disabled people in all parts of their societies, by seriously moving forward with implementing the UNCRPD**.

**The looming global climate crisis requires us all to redouble our** efforts, seizing every opportunity to reverse Global Warming, while at the same time ensuring we have effective and fully tested disability friendly disaster emergency procedures in place. Our by word remains **Nothing About Us Without Us.** We call on all of you to make sure this happens.

#### **CDPF Key points on the CHOGM Themes**

#### **Governance and the Rule of Law: Youth Involvement in Decision-Making**

* Parliaments must be accessible and ensure that disabled people are proportionately represented, 15% of Members of Parliament/Councillors. There should be a mixture of impairments and experiences with equal male and female representatives.
* Capacity building for young disabled activists should be funded by Governments and delivered by DPOs/OPDs, not NGOs.
* Far too many Commonwealth Countries having ratified the UNCRPD have **not** passed any laws to implement it. (29 Commonwealth countries).
* All Government Ministers, permanent Civil Servants and Advisers need Disability Equality Training and Human Rights Training
* There need to be clear and free pathways to legal redress to implement the UNCPD and other Human Rights Treaties throughout Commonwealth countries.
* Commonwealth countries should uphold the Law and not be complicit in deliberately challenging and changing the rights contained there-in. This is especially true for disabled people other asylum seekers who are seeking refugee status.

**Human Capital: Inclusive, Equitable and Accessible Opportunities**

* There is incredible waste of human capital, because of exclusionary forces and stereotypes based on out-dated and oppressive ideas about disabled people.
* Implementation of inclusive education from Early Years, Primary and Secondary to Tertiary education is fundamental to addressing the above problem.
* Provision of affordable Information Technology (IT) for all, especially disabled people. This should be developed as copyright free technology. There needs to be local centres with trained staff in every locality to empower disabled people with aides and in using IT.
* There needs to be a massive vocational training initiative to up-skill all the 150 million young disabled people in the Commonwealth, who dropped out of school as it was not able to meet their needs. People should not be written off because the education system failed them.
* Tax relief schemes should be developed in all countries so firms can operate positive discrimination to employ disabled young people.
* Funding for start up enterprises, especially in food production, accessible infrastructure and housing /technology, and addressing development of alternative green sources of energy, waste disposal and food. Our experience is that these can be very successful if run by democratic cooperatives without the bottom line of profit, but instead based on reasonable remuneration and a growing social input.
* Sex equality should be a primary principle in the above projects.

**Trade, Entrepreneurship and Employment**

* For many years disabled people have been viewed as unproductive. This is not true if given the training and reasonable accommodations. Disabled workers are more productive because they have to prove themselves, like women in non-stereotyped roles.
* We need to be arguing for a new system of value and economic worth based on the true cost and benefit of human activity. This could be linked to an internationally enforced system of taxation of the rich and a minimum income for all. The value should be calculated on harm to the planet and benefit to humanity including all disabled people. The world has currently sufficient productive resources to give every single person a minimum income of £14,000 per year.
* Capturing natural sources of energy-sunlight, wind, hydro, tidal, wave, geothermal and kinetic must be the priority. Only 3% of all of these would meet all of humankind’s needs.
* Precisely because disabled people have often been viewed as unproductive, bringing them into the broader economic sustainable system will created a disproportionate amount of added value.

**Information and Communication Technology and Innovation**

* Though Covid-19 was bad news for many, especially disabled people, it did point to alternative more climate friendly ways of carrying out human activities.
* Use of technology for distance meetings such as Zoom cut out the tyranny of distance (though it also showed up the lack of connectivity on IT networks).
* This can be and was adapted to include disabled people who in the past have been prevented from joining in.
* It changed the geographic principles of face-to-face contact and replaced with virtual contact.
* The Covid period also showed up the inequality of access to information and the economic downsides of this, creating greater inequality, especially for disabled people.
* We need a major and sustained Global effort to close the IT Gap. This will regenerate useful economic activity and creation of value. Key principles of universal design and accessibility must guide this revolution, so all can be engaged regardless of their impairing condition.

**Sustainability: Environment, Climate Change and Blue Economies**

* 30 of the 40 countries most at risk from rising sea level are in the Commonwealth, mainly small island countries. The Commonwealth has therefore a moral and human values responsibility to prioritise early phasing out of reliance on fossils fuels that are increasing the rate of global warming and therefore the rise of sea-levels.
* Australia, India, and UK and other fossil fuel reliant States must be held to targets of ceasing reliance on fossil fuels by 2050.
* The economic recession following Covid 19, fossil fuel energy prices, world supply problems and war such as in Ukraine must not be allowed to derail the agreed protocols on tackling climate change.
* The opposite must now apply. The current crises must lead to an enhanced global effort to green the planet and stop the use of fossil fuels with increased generation of clean eco-friendly electricity and heating. The global Green Deal can and should provide millions of jobs and vocational training opportunities which train and employ disabled people. The fact that there is a crisis should inspire and push all Commonwealth and International Agencies to redouble their efforts in this direction. The Commonwealth and the United Nations can and must play a vital role in coordinating this initiative within the current Human Rights respecting framework.
* Countries who did not create the environmental crisis must be fully compensated for having to respond to it by the countries that created Global Warming.
* A greater priority must be given to disability friendly disaster preparation systems. A case in point from the UK is we are at the 5th Anniversary of the deaths of 72 people in the Grenfell Tower Block, North Kensington. 30 plus of these fatalities were disabled people with no evacuation plan. They were told to stay in their flats. The flammable cladding on the outside of the building spread the fire very quickly. The Inquiry has called on the Government to introduce individual Evacuation Plans for all Disabled People. The UK Government has rejected this on cost grounds. This is a Human Rights abuse. The Inquiry also called for all similar cladding to be removed from 1000’s of high rise buildings. This also has not happened, and no one has been arrested for corporate manslaughter.
* If we continue to put a lower value on the lives of disabled people in emergencies and disasters, we are all guilty of Human Rights abuse.

**Health and COVID-19**

* “To safeguard the future, we commit to strengthen national, regional, and global capacities to respond to potential infectious disease outbreaks, by substantially increasing our epidemic preparedness spending. This will enhance the protection of everyone, especially vulnerable groups that are disproportionately affected by infectious diseases.” This was part of the G20 statement on 26th March when the Covid pandemic was at its height. Similar statements were made at G7 meeting in St.Ives, England in June 2021, including providing sufficient funding for equalisation of vaccination. Unfortunately, neither has happened and citizens of the Commonwealth remain more exposed to this and the next pandemic.
* We demand that the Governments of the World, Commonwealth, the World Health Organisation and United Nations take the preservation of our lives seriously, in a time when the encroachment on wildlife is leading to an ever greater threat of subsequent deadly pandemics.
* Disabled people are meant to have equal access to medical treatment (Article 25) and have choice and control over the treatment offered to us (Article 12), especially those of us with mental health issues.
* Women and girls must have control of their own fertility, access to contraception and not be subjected to involuntary sterilisation and other such procedures. All young people, including those who are disabled people, must receive effective sex and relationships education.
* A healthy and balanced diet sufficient for healthy growth is a right for all children and young people and much greater international effort needs to be made to ensure this is delivered to all children, especially to the increasing numbers living in poverty.
* The time has come when all those kept in orphanages and institutions especially disabled young people, should be placed in a family situation. This particularly applies to those who are Neurodiverse and/or with Mental Health Conditions, with the right support to exercise choice and freedom in their lives.

******Nothing About Us Without Us

To find out more about the Commonwealth Disabled People’s Forum and how DPOs can join go to [www.Commonwealthdpf.org](http://www.Commonwealthdpf.org) General Secretary Richard Rieser rlrieser@gmail.com