

Thimphu Declaration on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders

We, as a group of leaders, policy makers, academics, professionals, practitioners, advocates, self-advocates, caregivers, families, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders participating in the International Conference on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders, held in Thimphu, Bhutan, 19-21 April 2017:

Aware that autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders, a lifelong disability affecting brain function, may cause significant challenges in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms if adequate support is not provided;

Noting the increase in the number of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders and other neurodevelopmental disorders, and the likelihood that still more persons remain unidentified or incorrectly identified and cared for in society and in health facilities mainly due to lack of awareness, limited access to and capacity of health care systems, particularly in low and middle income countries;

Concerned over the vast impact of autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders on health and well-being, as well as the economic burden, on individuals, families, and the whole of society;

Deeply concerned that individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other neurodevelopmental disorders face major challenges including social stigma, isolation and discrimination, and that individuals and families in need, especially in low resource contexts, often have poor access to appropriate information, support and services;

Recognizing the important contributions of governments, international community and civil society organizations, that have led to increased public concerns and awareness and political commitment to address autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders;

Recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/139 declaring 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day; and United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/82 on "Addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders, developmental disorders and associated disabilities";

Recognizing that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have addressed the needs of persons with autism and other developmental disorders, including through ensuring healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages (SDG3), inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG4), promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8), reduce inequalities (SDG10), make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG11), and strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (SDG17).



Recalling the World Health Assembly Resolution 67.8 on Autism, and the WHO SEA Regional Committee Resolution SEA/RC65/R8 "Comprehensive and coordinated efforts for the management of autism spectrum disorders and development disabilities", adopted in 2014 and 2012 respectively;

Reaffirming the 2011 Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities, and the 2013 Delhi Declaration of the South Asian Autism Network (SAAN) for Autism Spectrum Disorders Conference;

We hereby adopt this Declaration and undertake to:

1. Welcome the WHO South-East Asia Regional Strategy on Autism Spectrum Disorders;
2. Call upon governments to integrate the needs of those with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders in health, education, social services and socioeconomic development policy, planning and implementation, as well as other national efforts in achieving Sustainable Development Goals;
3. Collectively enhance whole-of-society and whole-of-government efforts to strengthen national capacity; including health, education and social care systems; to provide services and cares for, as well as take measures to remove stigma and promote social inclusiveness for individuals and families with autism spectrum disorders and other neurodevelopmental disorders;
4. Strengthen information systems and research and promote knowledge and experience sharing, within and across countries, particularly on best practices with a focus on the lifespan needs of those with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders;
5. Call upon governments at all levels to work together with civil society including academia, professionals, and non-governmental organizations, as well as private sector and the media, in addressing autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders, and effectively implement this Thimphu Declaration on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders.
6. Invite United Nations agencies, development partners and international organizations to facilitate cooperation and collaboration and support countries in the implementation of this Thimphu Declaration, in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

