



General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 November 2013

Original: English

Sixty-eighth session

Agenda item 27 (b)

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Letter dated 30 September 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I would like to draw your attention to a systemic failure on the part of the General Assembly, which emerged very clearly last week, and which demands from us a remedy — notwithstanding the broadly held view, and one which we share completely, that under your inspired leadership, we enjoyed a very successful high-level segment.

To be precise, in the high-level meeting relating to the Millennium Development Goals and persons with disabilities, 47 delegations, with Jordan among them, together with 13 relevant organizations, were denied the possibility of speaking in the round-table discussions. It was almost without precedent that such a large number of Member States were informed they would not speak. Why was this so?

The General Assembly had decided in its resolution [66/124](#) of 19 December 2011 to hold two interactive round tables and yet, to our initial astonishment, in July we were informed by the Secretariat there would be a speakers' list — hardly indicative of the interaction to be. On further reflection, however, we decided then there was no cause for alarm or panic because, with an imposed time limit, a one-day session was very plausible. Indeed, a three-minute time restriction was announced by the respective co-chairs at the start of both round tables on 23 September, yet — and here is the failure — it was so poorly enforced, the co-chairs themselves had little choice but to refuse a significant number of Member States and others from taking the floor by the close (especially) of the second session.

Jordan, like many others, is committed to the cause of championing the rights of persons with disabilities. Its delegation was led by the Chairman of the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, who also leads all discussions within Jordan on the subject matter at hand, and included the deputy Chairperson, another disabled senior official and one assistant. They travelled from Jordan to New York believing they would participate actively, and yet, notwithstanding the



expenses apportioned to the trip (which, with hindsight, could otherwise have been allocated for project support inside Jordan) this was not to be.

This sort of thing must not reoccur. The co-chairs of any such meeting must understand their primary responsibility when chairing is to ensure the fair representation of all States when it comes to participation. Those delegations who want to engage in the discussion, should be able to do so — recognizing, of course that, within that general framework, precedence be given in the order of speakers (and only in the order of speakers) when it comes to the seniority of the official concerned. The co-chairs must not feel timid about enforcing those rules which would guarantee that basic understanding. If we cannot do it fairly, we should not do it at all.

To be sure, Mr. President, it is us, the Member States, and no one else, who are to blame for this failure. We ask for meetings and then bind them to budgetary limitations, and then, finally, we do not abide by what is required. We would commend to your leadership a discussion about how to better ensure it will not be repeated again.

Mr. President, we have every confidence in your considerable diplomatic experience and skill to lead us in finding a better method by which the General Assembly can achieve its stated objectives.

I ask that this letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Zeid Ra'ad Zeid **Al-Hussein**
Permanent Representative
