



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva

Statement

Statement by H.E. Ms. Samina Alvie, First Lady

**Global Report on Effectiveness to Assistive
Technology (GReAT) Consultation**

(22-23 August 2019, Geneva, Switzerland)

Chairs,
Dr. Tedros, Director General, WHO
Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel privileged to be present here today for a cause that is close to my heart as we have gathered for consultations on Global Report on Effective Access to Assistive Technology. I feel proud to represent strong political will and resolve in Pakistan echoing the sentiments of our President and Prime Minister in reaching out to those in need of Assistive Technology.

Health is an important determinant of economic and social prosperity of a country. The investment in health sector is of utmost importance for advancing the developmental agenda at national and international levels. We all have the opportunity and responsibility to ensure that our populations, vulnerable populations in particular, continue to live healthy, productive and independent lives, irrespective of the age and health conditions.

The power of human mind and dreams knows no bound. Disabilities cannot and should not restrict fulfilment of any person's dreams and

aspirations. The brilliant creativity of anyone cannot be constrained if smarter Assistive Technologies unlock our voices and talent.

Assistive Technology is basically for upholding human dignity. The persons with disability often face challenges in performing activities of daily living independently or even with assistance. These challenges can be minimized with the assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices.

Over a billion people around the world need Assistive Technology and 90% of those who need Assistive Technology do not have access to it, thereby having a significant adverse impact on the education, livelihood, health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies.

It is indeed a pleasure to note that Assistive Technology is drawing commitment at both global and regional levels from top leadership of WHO Member States, a sign that our world is changing for the better and that there is a hope for those in need of Assistive Products.

Recognizing that the inclusion of Assistive Technology is essential to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets of universal health coverage, inclusive and equitable quality education, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with the Member States, is pushing for the agenda of improving access to Assistive Technology.

Pakistan appreciates support from WHO membership for wholeheartedly supporting the important initiative of improving access to Assistive Technologies. The WHO Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE initiative) since its inception has become a globally respected platform which fosters international cooperation and brings Assistive Technology stakeholders together.

Pakistan has been a strong advocate and flag bearer of access to Assistive Technology, both at regional and global level. It was a result of our consistent efforts that for the first time in 2015, Assistive Technology made it to the agenda of the WHO Executive Board. On Pakistan's request, Eastern Mediterranean Region became the first WHO Region to adopt a regional resolution on the subject and developed a strategic framework to improve access to Assistive Technology at a Regional consultation hosted by Pakistan. To achieve objectives of global advocacy for the cause, a brave

young doctor from Pakistan who had sustained spinal cord injury, Dr. Sana Hafeez, became the first global WHO Assistive Technology Champion.

For translating strong political will into action, the Government of Pakistan has developed legislative instruments in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to make it a state obligation to ensure access to Assistive Technology. The Ordinance on Disabled Persons was promulgated in 1981. Pakistan adopted National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2002. We ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2010.

The Government of Pakistan stands firm in its resolve to ensure that its population is healthy and has equitable access to quality health services for everyone. We duly acknowledge that development goals cannot be realized without taking steps towards building a healthy nation.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, a national initiative as part of social protection programme has been launched for provision of free of cost Assistive Products to all those who need them across the country. The initiatives undertaken by Pakistan can also serve as a model for other countries. We would be happy to provide any technical support in the implementation of such initiatives. We are committed to undertake concrete measures to develop specific strategies and programmes, create synergies and alliances, and encourage innovation and research in the area of Assistive Technology.

Let us reaffirm our commitment to develop, implement and strengthen policies and programmes to improve access to Assistive Technology through the delivery of integrated package of essential care services to every citizen.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate the organizers for successful organization of this very important event. I am thankful to the WHO, especially its country office in Pakistan, for their continued support to improve health sector in Pakistan. I also thank all the participants for their commitment to the cause of persons with disabilities, and wish them great success in their deliberations.

Thank you.
