Mr Chairperson, Your Excellencies.

I am honoured to address this committee today as the youth delegate of Finland*.*

**All human beings** are born free and equal in dignity and human rights. That is the very beginning of the first article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Nobody is born marginalized**. One might be born impaired but nobody is born disabled. Marginalization and disability are circumstances created by the society. One might be impaired, one might belong to an ethnic minority or a family living in economic strain. One might be young or one might be a woman but it is only in relation to other people and the world when those attributes turn into factors pushing individuals to the margins, reducing their opportunities to flourish and reach their fullest potential. But who are the marginalized?

**More than 50% of the world’s population is under 30 years of age**. But when you look at the power structures and decision making in our countries, one wouldn’t believe it. The youth is pushed into the margins, viewed as a group threatening the stability of our societies.

**If you zoom in into that crowd** of billions of children and young people, you soon discover that 90% of them live in the global South, 10 percent in the North. And yet again: **look at the power**. If you look around in this room, you soon discover that the balance in youth participation and the voices of youth that are brought out to the international public, don't quite match with the statistics. Who will hear the voice of the voiceless? How can we hear the voice of the voiceless? Who are the voiceless?

I agree with Finland's Minister for International Development Heidi Hautala who claimed in the High Level Meeting on Disability and Development that "**reduction of inequalities is one of the central challenges of the post-2015 agenda."** Ensuring sustainable development requires input from all the people living on this planet. This planet is all we have and we must respect its environmental boundaries. Climate change, deforestation, land degradation or exploitation of renewable resources cannot be tackled by the efforts of few. This planet and the people living on it cannot afford pushing a substantial number of human beings into the powerless margins based on their age, ethnic background or abilities.

Mr Chairperson, distinguished Youth Delegates,

**On the global scale, I am a success story**.

**I am a woman**, I am disabled and I grew up outside the capital city of my country. On that scale, there are not many disabled women who have reached the same as I have: Literacy. University education. Employment. A possibility to represent my country on the UN level.

People often tell me they **forget I'm disabled. So do I**. My identity is primarily something else than disability and impairment and that is because I've been surrounded by people who have seen my abilities, my potential and my capacity.

**For every child, young person, every human** being deserves to be seen as full of potential despite their age, physical qualities or their socio-economic background. It is the responsibility of the international community to direct the world’s attention to those in the margins. **Unless we measure** our success in the development of the most vulnerable, we cannot talk about success in the first place. Gaining development for the majority by pushing those who have the least even deeper in their despair does not bring us any glory, but shames us.

**I call for a new era of inclusive development** - development for all. This development will need financial resources and it requires specific, transparent collection of disaggregated data; data that is openly available for everyone to use.

Most importantly: development requires specific targets and indicators for different populations such as the youth or the disabled. **We get what we measure**.

I urge the international community to **direct world's** **attention** to the poorest, the most uneducated, the most vulnerable. But **do nothing about them without** **them**. Because the experts of disability are the disabled themselves, the experts on girls and women are the girls and women and the experts of youth are the young people.

It is time we gave a voice to the voiceless.

Thank you.