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U.S. Ambassador Visits the National Commission for Persons with Disability

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE – In an effort to foster greater awareness of the rights of people with disabilities, the United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone Michael Owen paid a familiarization visit to the National Commission for Persons with Disability (NCPD) in Freetown on Wednesday, June 5. In a brief statement, Ambassador Owen commended the government of Sierra Leone for its increased commitment on disability issues including the passing of the Disability Act.

Ambassador Owen highlighted challenges faced by persons with disabilities not only in Sierra Leone, but in the U.S. as well. He reiterated the U.S. Government's commitment to support persons with disabilities. "We value the relationship between the U.S. Embassy and the NCPD and want to assist in any way we can to support your efforts in raising awareness about the Disability Act," Ambassador Owen said. Ambassador Owen noted that he hoped his visit to the commission will generate more awareness about the work of the NCPD. He promised to create linkages between the NCPD and other disabled groups in the United States.

Chairman of the NCPD Frederick J.M. Kamara thanked Ambassador Owen for making time to visit the Commission. He reiterated the importance of publicizing the Disability Act. Kamara talked about activities lined up for action by the Commission, which includes the development of a database of persons with disability in the country. He said the Commission can only succeed in its quest to raise awareness and advocate for persons with disabilities if the Commission knows the percentage of Sierra Leoneans living with disability. Kamara highlighted challenges faced by persons with disabilities in the country and called on all to assist the Commission in meeting their needs. He also emphasized the need for recreational facilities for persons with disabilities in the country.

The NCPD was established in June 2012 as prescribed by the Persons with Disability Act of 2011 with a mandate to ensure the well-being of persons with disabilities. The Act protects persons with disabilities from discrimination in education, employment, and envisages positive action in certain areas to overcome obstacles including in access to public facilities, transport, health, and justice.

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