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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

US Supports Social Inclusion for the Physically Challenged

Lagos— With the screening of a 15-minute documentary highlighting the discrimination and social exclusion experienced by persons living with disabilities, a 2015 Mandela Washington Fellowship (MWF) alumna, Ms. Ejiro Sharon Okotie, has challenged policymakers and employers of labor on the need to integrate physically challenged persons into the Nigerian labor market.

Titled *Changing the Dialogue*, the documentary, sponsored by the United States Mission in Nigeria, was produced by Ms. Okotie, a young leader living with her own disability.

“Changing the Dialogue” features persons living with disabilities including award-winning music producer Cobhams Asuquo; 2015 MWF alumna cum disability-rights activist Grace Alache Jerry; journalist and news producer Michael Fadeyi and Dr. Adebayo Adebukola, a development consultant.

Speaking during the September 8 screening, Public Affairs Officer Darcy Zotter stated that removing barriers and creating a world in which physically challenged persons enjoy dignity will bring about their full inclusion in the society.

“The United States is committed to creating accessible environments for people with disabilities so that they may be better included in society. The United States government encourages and assists governments and civil society organization to learn about the development and effective implementation of laws to protect the rights of persons with disabilities,” said Public Affairs Officer Darcy Zotter

Explaining the motivation behind the production of the documentary, Okotie said, “I believe it is important to show everyone that disabled people who are ready to work do not need pity or handouts. That is why I decided to work with my partners to produce this documentary, featuring successful, inspiring people living with disabilities.”

Distinguished guests who attended the event included the Lagos State Deputy Governor Idiat Adebule who was represented by Permanent Secretary Yetunde Odejayi. Other attendees were policymakers, corporate executives, human resource managers, as well as members of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities.

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