

# **Statement by the Minister of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity, Hon. Ashok Kumar Subron, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024**

1. Today, on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024, we are observing the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.
2. As Minister of the new Government of “L’Alliance du Changement” responsible for the portfolio of Disabilities, it is with great respect that I am addressing the entire Mauritian nation today.
3. The third of December has been decreed as a special day by the United Nations so that each family from every country, and every nation reflects on the living conditions, on the rights and on the dignity of Persons with Disabilities. This special day provides an opportunity for every citizen to correct any injustice that may exist against people living with disabilities and ensure their inclusive and sustainable future.
4. There are more than 1 billion people, in the world today, living with a disability including nearly 87,000 in the Republic of Mauritius.
5. The commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities today coincides with the advent of a new Government in Mauritius.
6. Although Mauritius has made much progress in advancing the cause of people with disabilities, there are still many challenges requiring fundamental changes that need to be addressed.
7. Many people with disabilities and their families have expressed their grievances and sufferings to us, firsthand, during the election campaign. They may rest assured that this new Government will address these sufferings.
8. It is inconceivable that many citizens who already suffer from a disability, have to undergo further hardships before their rights are respected and their dues paid. In this context, all the services, that the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity offers, will be the subject of a major reorganisation and reform and additional investment will be injected therein to ensure justice and dignity for all.
9. It is unacceptable that thousands of elderly people having a disability are excluded from the Basic Invalid Pension on the ground that they receive the Basic Retirement Pension. It is a discrimination, which this new Government will eliminate.

10. Under the mandate of the new Government, persons with disabilities will continue to receive the Basic Invalid Pension, when they reach the age of 60, in addition to the Basic Retirement Pension. This will be one of the greatest social advances since the advent of the Independence of Mauritius.

11. This new Government is also planning to increase the Carers Allowance to Rs 10,000 during its term. All pensions will also be exempt from taxation.

12. In the context of the International Day of People with Disability, the new Government is reiterating its commitment to amend Section 16 of the Constitution of Mauritius, as part of the upcoming Constitutional Reform. Every Person with disability shall be protected by the Constitution against all forms of discrimination, including those on the basis of disability.

13. The new Government will soon promulgate “The Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act”. We will also consider the recommendations of civil society and NGOs on the said Act.

14. The new Government, myself and the Junior Minister, will also bring about a fundamental change, in terms of policy approach, on the issue of people with disabilities. We shall not only ensure the well-being and inclusion of people living with disabilities, but we will also address the socio-economic/structural causes that may result in disabilities within society:

- For example, in what ways do our consumption pattern lead to disabilities? What is the impact of pollution and environmental degradation on disabilities? What is the impact of industrial accidents and diseases on the proliferation of disabilities in society? What is the impact of social stress on the increase in disabilities? What is the impact of other accidents, such as road accidents on disabilities? What are the implications of poverty and social inequality on the increase of disabilities in society?

All these issues will need to be addressed within the framework of the new policy that our Ministry will put in place.

15. In the margin of the commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the time has also come to question stereotypes, eliminate stigma, and celebrate the strengths and resilience that people with disabilities bring to our society.

16. In this context I pay tribute to all our citizens, living with any form of disability, who have made our country proud, in various fields in the local and international spheres.

17. We shall, all, be inspired by their courage and determination, in everything we do.

18. Thank you.