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Special Olympics Launches Government Awareness Programme

To coincide with the UN General Assembly's upcoming high-level meeting in September regarding the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Special Olympics, the World's largest sports organisation for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, is embarking on an Awareness Programme targeting policy makers and parliamentarians across Europe and Eurasia. The Programme will focus on 58 countries within the Special Olympics Europe Eurasia region. The aim of the Awareness Programme is to highlight to Parliamentarians and Governments the vital work Special Olympics is doing every single day to improve the lives of millions of people with intellectual disabilities. This population, of which there are 200 million in the world, often face neglect, unmet health needs, bullying, discrimination and violence in many parts of the world.

"Governments have a collective responsibility and duty to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity for all, particularly for those who are vulnerable and marginalised. Our aim is to educate Governments on the power of Special Olympics and demonstrate how the lives, education and health of people with intellectual disabilities are being improved every single day in 170 countries as a result of Special Olympics. Special Olympics serves more than 4 million athletes and was originally an organisation that concentrated its efforts on sports training and competition. Whilst this continues, we now also focus on the needs of the athletes in relation to their health, their nutrition, their interaction with their communities, their acceptance and their inclusion. In this valuable work, there is a real opportunity to develop strong partnerships with Governments and legislators as we cannot achieve our ambitious goals in isolation from political leaders and policy makers," stated Mary Davis, Regional President of Special Olympics Europe Eurasia.

"Many Governments throughout our region are recognizing the advantages of co-operating closely with organisations such as ours in order to meet their obligations in line with their public policy agenda. They see our work as a vital component in helping to build cohesive communities, enhance democratic participation and strengthen relations between civil society and Governments. We have a tangible and practical contribution to make in helping to turn Governments' commitments and obligations into a reality and this will be the central message behind our Government Awareness Programme," concluded Mary Davis.

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