

REMARKS BY SUZANNE WRIGHT
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ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION
WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

- I would like to thank Her Highness Sheikha Mozah, as without her tenacity and vision, this would not have been possible...
- Also, Thank you Ambassador Al-Nasser, for your tirelessness and commitment in sponsoring this resolution and garnering consensus international support.
- When a family hears the heartbreaking news that their child has autism, their lives are never the same again...I can speak about this from personal experience.
- Three years ago, we watched in total disbelief as our grandson Christian—a healthy and lively two-year-old—started to lose his vocabulary, his laughter, and his ability to connect with our world...
- When my daughter first raised concerns to her doctor about Christian's changing behavior—the first sign that something might be wrong—he told her not to worry, that boys develop slower than girls...
- He was so wrong - Six months later, we received the devastating news that our grandson has autism ... and we were quickly and reluctantly drafted into the world of this challenging and debilitating neurological disorder.
- Until our lives were touched, we had no idea that we were in the middle of an urgent global health crisis affecting tens of millions worldwide...
- That's why we founded Autism Speaks in February 2005 to give autism the voice it deserves.
- In the U.S alone, autism affects 1.5 million individuals, and the numbers are increasing rapidly. Autism does not discriminate by geography, class or race - and it is a sobering fact that a new child is diagnosed with autism every 20 minutes
- From 1992, the year the U.S. government began collecting data, through 2003, the number of American children with autism skyrocketed a staggering 800%.
- Autism today affects 1 in 150 American children ... and a shocking 1 in 94 boys...compared to 1 in 10,000 just fourteen years ago. Compare this to the polio epidemic of 1950s, when 1 in 3,000 Americans was affected and it was a health crisis that galvanized the nation. We need that to happen for autism, but we need it to happen around the world.

- Last year, the United States Congress passed the Combatting Autism Act, authorizing up to \$1 billion in funding research and treatment over the next 5 years. Unfortunately appropriations for the bill have not yet been passed, but with the declaration of World Autism Awareness Day, we have a landmark opportunity to motivate real action in our own government.
- There is an immediate obligation to respond to this extremely urgent cause – Autism is not waiting, and neither are we... thank you all for listening... I would now like to turn the podium over to my husband and Co-Founder of Autism Speaks, Bob Wright.