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EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

On 22 May 2002, the Commission adopted resolution 58/4 on promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region in the twenty-first century, in which it proclaimed the extension of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, for another decade, 2003-2012. In October 2002, Governments adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific as the regional policy guideline for the new Decade. As of May 2004, 46 members and associate members of ESCAP have signed the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region. The new Decade (2003-2012) must ensure a paradigm shift from a charity-based approach to a rights-based approach to protect the civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights of persons with disabilities.

At the global level, the year 2003 was historic because the international community decided to elaborate a new Comprehensive International Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. At the second session of the Ad Hoc Committee to consider proposals for an International Convention, held from 16 to 27 June 2003 in New York, Member States agreed to start elaborating the Convention, and a special Working Group was established with a mandate to develop the consolidated draft text of a Convention.

The present paper summarizes (a) the current status of persons with disabilities in the ESCAP region at the inception of the new Decade; (b) the seven priority areas, four strategies for action under the Biwako Millennium Framework and supporting mechanisms; and (c) immediate ESCAP follow-up activities in 2003-2004.

There are a number of key areas that require ongoing critical action if the region is to satisfactorily achieve the inclusion of people with disabilities in society and in all mainstream development programmes in order to reach the goal of creating an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for all.

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