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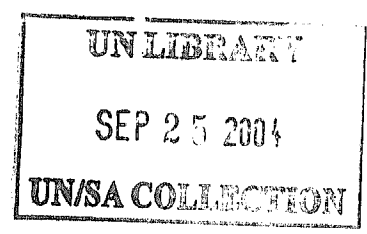
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**PROMOTING ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND  
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES  
WITH REASONABLE ADAPTATION**

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## Promoting Accessible Information and Communications Technologies with Reasonable Adaptation: learning from the Manila “Declaration” and “Design Recommendations” on Accessible ICT”\*

### *Summary*

The paper reviews issues and trends in the rapidly changing field of information and communications technologies (ICT) from the perspective of accessibility with reasonable adaptation. Accessibility is identified as an essential component of the broad human rights framework and development. The United Nations Standard Rules on Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities provide in Rule 5 that accessibility is a precondition for full participation and equality of persons with disabilities. Accessibility has emerged as an important consideration in the current process of elaborating an international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. The Working Group established by the Ad Hoc Committee concerned with the elaboration of the convention met at United Nations New York from 5-16 January 2004 to prepare a draft text of the convention, which includes a specific article on accessibility.

Two forces are driving accessibility concerns. One is the pace of elaborating a new international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, which, when adopted, is expected to include an article on “accessibility”. The second force relates to the rapid expansion in mobile communications and growing use of mobile communication devices to access Internet-enabled resources. Mobile users prefer sites that load quickly, are easy to navigate and use, and provide text equivalents for graphical content for low-bandwidth conditions – in short, accessible Web sites. Accessibility is a concern for all.

The development case for accessibility is its contribution in building a society for all; the value proposition is accessible designs provide the best possible solutions for all and not for any particular constituency.

The paper identifies six decision points in an accessibility with reasonable adaptation agenda, which provide a framework for research, development, testing and evaluation of pilot action for national capacity building and training of trainers in accessible ICT: (1) Policy framework for ICT accessibility with reasonable adaptation, (2) Assessing user needs and preferences, (3) Standards and guidelines for planning and design, (4) Selected procedures and tools, (5) Monitoring and evaluation of content and service accessibility, and (6) Promotion, information and outreach. It also presents a strategic planning outline to further an accessible ICT agenda.

The paper concludes by noting that accessibility is always “under construction” given the rapid pace of change in the ICT field and the changing needs, preferences and capacities of end users.