

Welcome to the new **ENABLE NEWSLETTER**, a service of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to keep you informed about the work of the UN system on disability issues. The **ENABLE NEWSLETTER** can be read on-line at [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=312](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=312).

### **UPDATE ON THE CONVENTION •**

As of 16 January 2008 there are 14 ratifications of the Convention and 8 ratifications of the Optional Protocol. The Convention must have 20 ratifications for it to enter into force. Currently, there are 123 signatories to the Convention and 69 signatories to the Optional Protocol. For more information on the Convention, go to [www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities).



### **FEATURE STORY • The Convention in Brief**

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the first human rights convention of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the first legally binding instrument with comprehensive protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Thus, the Convention not only clarifies that States should not discriminate against persons with disabilities, it also sets out the many steps that States must take to create an enabling environment so that persons with disabilities can enjoy real equality in society.

All members of society have the same human rights—they include civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. Although existing human rights conventions offer considerable potential to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, it became clear that this potential was not being tapped. Indeed, persons with disabilities continued being denied their human rights and were kept on the margins of society in all parts of the world.

This continued discrimination against persons with disabilities highlighted the need to adopt a legally binding instrument which set out the legal obligations on States to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. The Convention marks a shift in thinking about disability from a social welfare concern, to a human rights issue, which acknowledges that societal barriers and prejudices are themselves disabling.

States negotiated the Convention with the participation of civil society organizations, national human rights institutions and inter-governmental organizations. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention and Optional Protocol on 13 December 2006, and opened for signature on 30 March 2007. By ratifying the Convention, a country accepts its legal obligations and will adopt implementing legislation. For other States, the Convention represents an international standard that they should endeavour to respect.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will enter into force on the 30th day after the 20th ratification. Given that there are currently 14 ratifications of the Convention, it is expected to enter into force during 2008. At that time, we will celebrate the entry into force of the Convention. For the text of the Convention, go to [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=12&pid=150](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=12&pid=150).

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM UN HEADQUARTERS •

### Making Civil Society Participation in the Convention Work

- In cooperation with the Government of Spain and Fundación ONCE, DESA and OHCHR organized an Expert Group Meeting entitled "Making it work - Civil Society Participation in the Implementation of the Convention," in Madrid, Spain, from 27 to 29 November 2007. The meeting reviewed future steps of the Convention process and implications for civil society participation. The meeting also examined the functioning of civil society mechanisms linked to other human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). An outcome document, approved by consensus at the end of the meeting was transmitted to the Government of Spain for future official transmission to UN Member States.

### International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2007

- The theme of the Day was "Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities." At the press briefing and panel discussion, speakers explained how companies benefit from employing persons with disabilities. At a piano concert that evening entitled "Different Notes," renowned artists from around the world performed at United Nations Headquarters.



Photo: Chris Sullivan (centre), Merrill Lynch Vice-President for Special Needs Financial Services, flanked by Judy Young, Vice-President of the National Business and Disability Council; and Edoardo Bellando, Department of Public Information, addressed a press conference on 3 December 2007. For more information on the Day, go to [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=110](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=110).

- In Article 27, the Convention recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities to work and employment on an equal basis with others. In most countries up to 80 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed. The International Labour Organization (ILO) commissioned a working paper on decent work entitled, "The Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities." To read the working paper on decent work, go to [www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/news/rightto.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/news/rightto.htm). For information on the numerous programmes and events organized by the ILO on the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, go to [www.ilo.org/global/What\\_we\\_do/Events/Campaigns/lang--en/WCMS\\_087695/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/Events/Campaigns/lang--en/WCMS_087695/index.htm).

### Disability Must be Included in the Development Agenda

- On 6 December, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang, gave a statement to the General Assembly entitled "Dialogue on Development, Presenting the United Nations Development Agenda." An estimated 20 per cent of the world's poor are persons with disabilities. Unless disability is included in the development agenda, achieving the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty and hunger by 2015 will be impossible. To read the publication, "The United Nations Development Agenda: Development for All," go to [www.un.org/esa/devagenda/UNDA1.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/devagenda/UNDA1.pdf). To read the note from the Secretariat on "Mainstreaming Disability in the Development Agenda," go to [www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/e-cn5-2008-6.doc](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/e-cn5-2008-6.doc).

### Human Rights Day, 10 December 2007

- The theme of the Day was "Dignity and Justice for All of Us." The core principles of human rights first set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), such as universality, interdependence and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, are crucial in

achieving justice. Non-discrimination, for example, has become one of the cross-cutting principles in human rights law. The principle is present in all the major human rights conventions, including in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. On Human Rights Day the Secretary-General launched a year-long campaign in which the UN system takes part in the lead up to the 60th birthday of the UDHR on 10 December 2008.

- One of the speakers at the afternoon dialogue at UN Headquarters was Shantha Rau with the NGO Subcommittee on Human Rights of People with Disabilities. The dialogue was entitled "All of It, for All of Us: Toward an Inclusive Human Rights Agenda." For more on Human Rights Day, go to [www.un.org/events/humanrights/2007](http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/2007).

### **UN Effort to Promote, Protect and Ensure the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

- On 13-14 December 2007, the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities conducted its first meeting. The IASG is a mechanism for international cooperation in support of the promotion and implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Membership of the IASG consists of United Nations systems, departments, agencies, funds and programmes whose work is relevant to the Convention. The meeting was organized by the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This group is developing a three-step approach—a statement of commitment, a strategy, and an action plan—to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

### **General Assembly Adopts Two New Resolutions on Disability**

- The General Assembly adopted two resolutions related to disability in December. The first, entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons: Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities," (62/127) calls upon all parties involved in discussions of UN system-wide coherence to ensure that the disability perspective is appropriately incorporated in the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. In the resolution, the General Assembly also decided that there will be a fifth review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action, to be conducted at its next session this year. Finally, it renamed the International Day of Disabled Persons, 3 December, to the "International Day of Persons with Disabilities." The second resolution adopted, in support of the Convention (62/170), requests the UN Secretariat, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to continue efforts to disseminate accessible information on the Convention and the Optional Protocol, to promote their understanding, to prepare for their entry into force and to assist States parties in implementing obligations under these instruments.

## **HIGHLIGHTS FROM UN AGENCIES AROUND THE WORLD •**

### **OHCHR: Freedom from Torture**

- On 11 December 2007 OHCHR hosted an expert seminar on "Freedom from Torture and Persons with Disabilities" in Geneva. A small group of experts met with the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak, and two representatives of the Committee against Torture, Ambassador Gallegos and Nora Sweaass, to consider the extent to which certain treatment of persons with disabilities, including in institutional settings, constituted torture. The seminar also considered ways for the Special Rapporteur to focus more attention, particularly in his monitoring of country missions, on prevention of torture of persons with disabilities. The Special Rapporteur announced his intention to raise the issue in his next report to the General Assembly.

### UNICEF Consulting with Youth on the Convention

- UNICEF, with the support of the Special Olympics, Save the Children UK, and Sweden, organized consultations with young persons with and without disabilities on a child-friendly text of the Convention. In October 2007, parallel to the Special Olympics, there was a dialogue with children in Shanghai. Also in October 2007, during a meeting organized by Save the Children, children in Sana'a, Yemen were consulted. In addition, from September to November 2007, there were online consultations held with children from all around the world through UNICEF - Voices of Youth. To participate in the creation of the Child Friendly version of the Convention, go to [www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction\\_cfc\\_questionnaire.php](http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction_cfc_questionnaire.php).

### WHO on Disability and Rehabilitation

- On 14 September 2007, a meeting of interested parties in disability and rehabilitation was held at WHO headquarters in Geneva. The meeting was co-chaired by Ambassador Don Mackay from New Zealand and Dr. Etienne Krug, Director, WHO Department of Violence and Injury Prevention and Disability. Representatives from the International Disability Alliance, NGOs, professional associations, Member States and other departments in WHO shared information on the progress of activities and recent developments related to the work of WHO on disability and rehabilitation. For more information on the WHO meeting on disability and rehabilitation, contact Alana Officer ([officera@who.int](mailto:officera@who.int)).
- From 5-8 November 2007, WHO held the third meeting of the Editorial Committee for a "World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation" in Geneva. This report, which is being jointly produced with the World Bank, will increase access to and promote the utilization of evidence-based research. The report launch is planned for 2009. For more information on the "World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation," contact Alana Officer ([officera@who.int](mailto:officera@who.int)).
- From 5-7 December 2007, WHO hosted a workshop on the "Guidelines for Community-Based Rehabilitation," which were prepared by WHO, ILO and UNESCO in partnership with leading international NGOs and organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs). This meeting concluded an extensive review process to incorporate the perspectives of local stakeholders into the guidelines. As part of this review process a regional workshop took place from 25-27 November at the Asia-Pacific Centre on Disability in Bangkok, Thailand. The workshop, hosted in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Christian Blind Mission International (CBM) involved 22 experts from 9 countries. The draft guidelines will be revised for a launch in late 2008. For more information on workshop on the "Guidelines for Community-Based Rehabilitation," contact Chapal Khasnabis ([khasnabis@who.int](mailto:khasnabis@who.int)).

### UN Information Centre: Towards Ratification in Russia

- The UN Information Centre in Moscow, along with the NGO Perspectiva, held a round-table discussion on 10 December 2007 on the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Towards its Ratification by Russia." This event was supported by the World Bank Moscow Office and the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator.

### UNFPA: Expert Group Meeting on "Sexual and Reproductive Health of Persons with Disabilities"

- UNFPA, in collaboration with WHO, organized an Expert Group Meeting in Brasilia, Brazil in December 2007. Experts from around the world met to highlight the importance of including persons with disabilities—particularly their right to sexual and reproductive health—in national policies and programmes worldwide. The two-day meeting was intended to validate and finalize a Draft Guidance Note on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Persons with Disabilities. The link to the press release on the Expert Meeting on "Sexual and Reproductive Health of Persons with Disabilities" is here: [www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=1086](http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=1086).



### UNHCR: Refugee Worker turns a Disability into an Advantage

- The UN refugee agency marked the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, 3 December, with a panel discussion in Geneva about UNHCR's role on the rights of persons with disabilities. Among those taking part was Safak Pavey, a 30-year-old UNHCR public affairs officer in Geneva. Pavey, who is originally from Istanbul, acquired a disability a decade ago when she was an art student in Switzerland. That has not prevented the outgoing aid worker from leading a full and active life. She talked to Web Editors Haude Morel and Leo Dobbs about her life and work with UNHCR. For excerpts from the interview with Safak Pavey, go to [www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/47503bec4.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/47503bec4.html).

### UN in Serbia Actively Engaged on Disability

- The UN Country Team (UNCT) in Serbia commissioned a Rapid Assessment on Persons with Disabilities in Serbia in the summer of 2007. Based on the Rapid Assessment Report recommendations, in 2008 the UNCT in Serbia will engage in a national advocacy campaign on the rights of persons with disabilities. For more information on the Rapid Assessment Report, contact Milena Isakovic ([milena.isakovic@undp.org](mailto:milena.isakovic@undp.org)).
- On 3 December, UNDP supported the event at the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Participants including MPs, high-level government officials in charge of labour and employment, and members of organizations of persons with disabilities. At a reception on 5 December, UN Resident Representative for Serbia, Lance Clark, and Gordana Rajkov, Member of Parliament, asked for action to support rights of persons with disabilities and ratification of the Convention. For more information from UNDP Serbia, go to [www.undp.org.yu/newsroom/news/full\\_info.cfm?ID=54](http://www.undp.org.yu/newsroom/news/full_info.cfm?ID=54).



Reception celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Serbia

### PUBLICATIONS •

View these documents at [www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=37&pid=34](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=37&pid=34).

**Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, DESA, OHCHR and IPU:** "Handbook for Parliamentarians on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," 2007. The Handbook is in the process of being translated into French, Arabic, Russian and Serbian.

**International Labour Organization:** "The Right to Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities," 2007.

**UNICEF:** "Innocenti Digest on the Rights of Children with Disabilities," by UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2007.

**United Nations Population Fund:** "Sexual and Reproductive Health of Persons with Disabilities," 2007.

**World Bank:** "People with Disabilities in India: From Commitments to Outcome," by Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, World Bank, May 2007.

**World Bank:** "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: It's Implementation & Relevance for the World Bank," by Katherine Guernsey, at el., World Bank, June 2007.

**World Bank:** "Measuring Disability Prevalence," by Daniel Mont, World Bank, March 2007.

**World Bank:** "Social Analysis and Disability: A Guidance Note – Incorporating Disability-Inclusive Development into Bank-Support Projects," by Social Development Department, World Bank, March 2007.

## UPCOMING EVENTS •

**6-15 February 2008:** The 46th session of the Commission for Social Development will be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The theme this year is "Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All." An NGO event is planned the day before, 5 February. The work of the Special Rapporteur on Disability is on the agenda for the morning session on 8 February. There will be a panel discussion on mainstreaming disability in the development agenda on 12 February. For more information on the Commission for Social Development, go to [www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csod2008.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csod2008.htm).

**3-28 March 2008:** The seventh session of the Human Rights Council will be held in Geneva. One of the issues on the agenda is human rights and disability. It is expected that the Council will adopt a resolution which will outline some of the steps the Council will take to mainstream disability in the human rights agenda. The High Commissioner will submit a report on OHCHR activities on human rights and disability as a background document (A/HRC/7/61). For the OHCHR website, go to [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil).

**19-22 May 2008:** The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and Leonard Cheshire Disability are organizing a global conference on the Convention in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. To register for the conference, go to [www.lcint.org/?lid=3032](http://www.lcint.org/?lid=3032).

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## CONTACT INFORMATION • [www.un.org/disabilities](http://www.un.org/disabilities)

The ENABLE NEWSLETTER is a free service of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, of the Division for Social Policy and Development, within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) at the United Nations Secretariat in New York.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol are serviced by a joint Secretariat, consisting of staff of both the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), in New York, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva. Currently working in the Secretariat are Patricia David, Vanessa Edwards, Akiko Ito, Sayre Nyce, Renzo Ramella, Thomas Schindlmayr, Nicola Shepherd, Ann Syauta, Joop Theunissen, Simon Walker, and Adriana Zarraluqui.

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