

Welcome to the **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.

UPDATE ON THE CONVENTION •

As of 25 February 2008 there are 17 ratifications of the Convention, so 3 more ratifications are needed for it to enter into force. The Optional Protocol has now received 11 ratifications. It will therefore enter into force at the same time as the Convention. Currently, there are 125 signatories to the Convention and 71 signatories to the Optional Protocol. For more information on the Convention, go to www.un.org/disabilities.



FEATURE STORY • UN Commission Renews Mandate for Special Rapporteur and Agrees on Mainstreaming Disability in Development

The 46th session of the Commission for Social Development was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The theme this year was “Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All.” The Commission also discussed mainstreaming disability in the development agenda as an emerging issue on the Commission’s agenda. The Commission agreed on two resolutions related to disabilities.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Disability, Sheikha Hessa Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani, of Qatar, presented her annual report to the Commission on 8 February, highlighting her findings of a global survey of measures taken by Governments in support of the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities. The Special Rapporteur, who has fulfilled this role since 2002, also reported on her activities in support of the new Convention.

After a few rounds of informal debates, the Commission adopted a consensus text that not only renews the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Disability until 2011, but also expands the mandate to include awareness-raising and technical cooperation in support of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Special Rapporteur will continue to promote the equalization of opportunities by, for, and with persons with disabilities, and protect their human rights in support of the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities.

A second resolution, entitled “Mainstreaming Disability in the Development Agenda,” was also adopted by the Commission, recognizing that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without mainstreaming disability into the development agenda, and requesting the UN Secretariat to focus on mainstreaming in its reporting on disability for the next General Assembly.

More information on the Commission, its documents, resolutions and panel discussion can be found at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/>.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM UN AGENCIES AROUND THE WORLD •

UNDP Administrator Makes New Commitment to Disability

- The Administrator for the UNDP conveyed a message on 31 January that puts a clear endorsement on making support for persons with disabilities one of UNDP's priorities. The following is from the Administrator's note:

UNDP will actively undertake support of the Convention emphasizing the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies for sustainable development, as well as addressing the human resources and facilities and services implications for persons with disabilities. On the first front, a strategic decision has been made to identify persons with disabilities as a key group and focus on disability as a major issue of inclusive development to be reflected in our practice areas, particularly in Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Democratic Governance, HIV/AIDS and Poverty Reduction. On the second front, the Office of Human Resources has set high priorities for dealing with these issues. In order to ensure that the general principles of the Convention are respected, UNDP staff will need to find ways to develop programmes for the social and economic growth of persons with disabilities; to expand our physical environments and information technology systems; and to include, empower and employ persons with disabilities within UNDP.

World Bank and OECD Conduct Joint Effort for the Achievement of Millennium Development Goals 2 & 3

- A Memorandum of Understanding on the Childhood Disability Screening in Developing Countries has been signed and agreed between the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in order to accelerate the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 2 & 3. MDG Goal 2 is to achieve universal primary education and Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women. This joint effort aims to support developing countries in gathering qualitative data of children ages 2-9 with disabilities by developing a methodology that is transferable to other developing countries.

World Bank Psycho-Social Listserv is Open for Sign-Up

- The Psycho-Social Working Group of the World Bank has launched a new listserv to effectively build and expand the network of those interested in and/or working on these issues within and outside the World Bank. To sign up, go to <http://go.worldbank.org/SIP5GYWK00>.

ILO to Produce Advocacy Kit on Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities

- The ILO is producing an advocacy kit on decent work for persons with disabilities. The kit, which will be completed in March 2008, will provide its partners and interested stakeholders with elements needed to manage campaigns to promote a more inclusive workplace. Key elements of the kit include a special report highlighting presentations and recommendations by leading disability experts and international activists on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2007. In addition, it contains a special message by Academy Award winning actress Marlee Matlin on decent work and more rights for persons with disabilities. Ms. Matlin's video message can be viewed on ILOTV, YouTube, and on the ILO website here: http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Broadcast_materials/Video_News_Release/lang-en/WCMS_088117/index.htm.

Ratification Talk in Serbia

- On 29 January, the Serbian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy hosted a roundtable on the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Over half a million persons with disabilities in Serbia continue fighting for their rights and for the improvement of living conditions. UNDP legal expert Damjan Tatic gave a presentation about the laws that need to be harmonized before the Convention is ratified. While Serbia is the first country in the region to have a Law Preventing Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities, some other pieces of legislation will need to be amended in order to bring them in compliance with the Convention.



Photo: Speakers at the Roundtable (left to right): Gordana Rajkov, Member of Parliament, Damjan Tatic, UN Legal Expert, Meho Omerovic, Member of Parliament, Ljiljana Lucic, State Secretary, and Vladimir Pesic, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Photo: Biljana Ducic

OHCHR Raises Awareness in the Maldives

- From 27-30 January, OHCHR undertook an awareness-raising mission to the Maldives to promote understanding of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. Meetings were held with various Government departments with responsibility for human rights and disability, members of Parliament, the National Human Rights Commission, the Resident Coordinator and representatives of UN specialized agencies and other members of the UN country team. A meeting for national and international NGOs attracted over 100 participants, and another meeting brought together some 50 parents and children with disabilities. The mission demonstrated a deep interest in learning more about the Convention and identified areas where further knowledge is necessary, such as on the right to education, national implementation institutions and the need for dedicated staff to work on the Convention to ensure successful implementation. At the end of the mission, the Government announced its intention to recommend to the President that the Maldives ratify the Convention.

Sharing Experiences on Best Practices in ICT Services for Persons with Disabilities

- The First Arab Regional Conference on Sharing Experiences on Best Practices in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Services for Persons with Disabilities took place in Cairo, Egypt. 280 participants representing both Arab countries and non-Arab countries and experts from WHO, the International Telecommunication Union and the Arab League attended. The objectives were to review the use of ICT applications for persons with disabilities and the roles of different stakeholders in providing such services; identify success stories; and discuss the responsibilities of signatory countries, UN specialized agencies and other concerned parties with respect to the entry into force and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Cairo Declaration on Supporting Access to Information and Technology Services for Persons with Disabilities can be read here: <http://www.afak.org/includes-pdf/CairoDeclaration-EN.pdf>.

Identifying Concrete Actions in Mozambique Towards Implementation of the Convention

- Mozambique signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30 March 2007 and is in the process of ratification. WHO, in collaboration with the Mozambican Youth and Disability Association (AJODEMO) and Handicap International, organized a workshop on the Convention which was opened by the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, Dr João Candiane. Participants made recommendations and put forth concrete ideas on how to advance the implementation of the Convention specifically in relation to political rights, right to education, access to cultural life (including sports), health and rehabilitation, and situations of emergency. A brochure outlining the provisions of the Convention was made available in Portuguese.

Atlas: Global Resources for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (Atlas-ID)

- The Atlas: Global Resources for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities 2007 represents for the first time the information on resources and services available for persons with intellectual disabilities around the world. It includes information from 147 countries, representing 95% of the world population. The Atlas has been produced by WHO in collaboration with Montreal PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Reference in Mental Health. The results of the Atlas reveal a lack of adequate policy and legislative response and a serious deficiency of services and resources allocated to the care of persons with intellectual disabilities globally. The situation is especially worrisome in most low- and middle-income countries. Persons with intellectual disabilities are frequently the most vulnerable group and, on many occasions, are exposed to human rights violations and deprived of minimum services and dignity. For more information on Atlas-ID, visit http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/en/.

UNIC Moscow Hosts Discussion on Persons with Disabilities

- On 1 February, UNIC Moscow hosted the presentation of the Regional Report of Europe produced in 2007 by the International Disability Rights Monitor (IDRM), the project representing collaboration between several international and national disability groups. The goals of the project: promoting the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society and advancing the use of international humanitarian law to ensure that their rights are respected and enforced. The meeting provided a discussion space for advocates of the rights of persons with disabilities, but also for raised public awareness to this issue. UNIC's report on the launch (in Russian) can be found here: http://www.unic.ru/news_inf/viewer.php?uid=27.

PUBLICATIONS •

View these documents at www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=37&pid=34.

WHO: Atlas: Global Resources for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, 2007 (Atlas-ID).

OHCHR: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on progress in the implementation of the recommendations contained in the study on the human rights of persons with disabilities, 2008.

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, et al., 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 •

The Convention Will Enter into Force: The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has quickly garnered wide support from Member States since opening for signature on 30 March 2007. The Convention will enter into force 30 days after the deposit of the 20th ratification. As of 25 February 2008, there are 17 ratifications. While a date cannot be accurately predicted, entry into force may be expected in May 2008. Member States, civil society and the UN system are invited to celebrate this momentous occasion.

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). To learn more about the Human Rights Council on the OHCHR website, go to www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil.

30 March: The first anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

2 April 2008: The General Assembly adopted a resolution last year, designating 2 April as World Autism Awareness Day, to be observed every year beginning in 2008. Member States, as well as UN and other organizations, are invited to raise awareness of autism and to observe the Day in an appropriate manner.

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

CONTACT INFORMATION • 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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