**The New Urban Agenda: Rehabilitation International’s Implementation Commitments”**

**UN-DESA Ecuador High Level Forum on Disability Inclusion and Accessible Urban Development, Session 2, Part 2 , Quito, October 16, 2016**

**I wish to start by sharing with you about Rehabilitation International’s engagements over the years to promote access for persons with disabilities in its multiple forms and contexts. We work through thematic groups we refer to as commissions. The group with RI that specifically engages in access-related activities is our International Commission on Technology and Accessibility (ICTA) that has been actively promoting the concept of Universal Design, in order to achieve the shared goal of building accessible urban cities inclusive of people with disabilities. Universal Design as a concept emerged from slightly earlier barrier free concepts, the broader *accessibility movement*, and *assistive technology;* it seeks also to blend to blend *aesthetics* into this core consideration. As life expectancy rises and modern medicine increases the survival rate of those with significant injuries, illnesses and birth defects, there has been an increasing interest in Universal Design. Universal Design is also applied to the design of technology, instruction, services, and other products and environments.**

**Curb cuts or sidewalk ramps, essential for people who use wheelchairs, are also used by all people. Use of low floor buses that kneel and are equipped with ramps, rather than on-board lifts, are ways to promote greater mobility for persons with disabilities.**

**“Universal design increases usability, safety, health and social participation through the design and operation of environments, products and systems in response to the diversity of people and abilities. It is a way of thinking that can be applied in any design activity, business practice, program and service involving interaction of people with the physical, social or virtual worlds, Rehabilitation International with its 94 years of work in the field of disability and rehabilitation is committed to continue being a driving force to realize the goal of inclusion for all persons, especially those with disabilities.”**

**Examples of projects follow. The first two can contribute to The New Urban Agenda.**

**Consultancies**

**1.The Qatar and Kuwait Access Strategy developed by RI are initiatives to promote accessibility in these countries. The results have been well received, evidenced by that fact the both countries’ governments adopted the inputs from the projects for their respective work on disabilities in the following years. The work continues.**

**2. Technical advice was provided to Dubai for its newly constructed mass transit system and was inaugurated during an RI World Meeting. RI worked with other organizations to help bring about significant accessibility changes. Ongoing.**

**3. Improvements in accessibility to shopping centres in Hong Kong, China, may provide examples to other cities regarding methods to adopt.**

**4. Disaster Risk Reduction for People with Disabilities: RI vigorously participated in the UN meetings resulting in the inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction and a plan for inclusion (The Sendai Framework). The ICTA TAsk Force on DiDRR co-organized with The Nippon Foundation (TNF) and Assistive TEchnology Development Organization (ATDO), an International Forum of DiDRR: Implementing the SEndai FRamework for Disaster Risk Reduction at TNF’s Headquarters, Tokyo, Japan. The seminar, carried out remotely, brought various experts (Canada, Japan, Ecuador, Netherlands) together to combine their data to construct the evolving best practices for use in planning in high density population locations prone to natural disasters, such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Ongoing**

**Training**

**1. Institute of Pakistan (IAP) Karachi Chapter: Building Material Exhibition & Conference, the IAPEX 2016 on “Responsible Architecture,” Topic - “Accessibility & Universal Design in the 21st Century.” April 2016**

**2. King Mongkut’s Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL), Thailand, initiative on Inclusive Designed Environment and Research (IDEaR), EVent - Innovation for Social Equality 2016 Forum, Bangkok, Topic - “Movements and Developments on Accessibility Issues. July 2016**

**3. Architects Regional Council for Asia - ARCASIA, 17th Asian Congress of Architects (ACA 17), Hong Kong, Session: Design and Social Responsibility, Topic - “ARCASIA Emergency Architects (AEA)” September 2016**

**4. Fire Ox International, Ireland, Event: Sustainable Fire Engineering 2016 Dublin Conference, Topic - “Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Architecture.” Sept 2016**

**Immediate Future Implementation**

**Adaptive Skiing Center: Yabuli, China (recreation for urban dwellers with disabilities)**

**2020 Tokyo Paralympics**

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