

Welcome to the new **ENABLE NEWSLETTER**, a service of the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities/UN Focal Point on Disability 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 23 June 2008 there are 27 ratifications of the Convention and 16 ratifications of the Optional Protocol. Currently, there are 129 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 • Commemorative Event for the Convention

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol entered into force on 3 May 2008, one month after the required 20th country ratified the treaty which guarantees rights of some 650 million people worldwide. This marks a major milestone in the effort to ensure equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities.

To commemorate the entry into force, the Secretariat of the Convention organized a public event open to all members of the international community, entitled "From Concept to Reality: Promoting Universal Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities." The event was held on 12 May 2008 in the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York.



The event was opened by the Acting President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly, Mr. Hjalmar W. Hannesson. The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, gave a statement on Human Rights, Development and Social Progress for All. In addition, remarks were made by Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Mr. Sha Zukang, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

[Ms. Kyung-wha Kang](#), as well as high-level government representatives such as H.R.H. Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid of Jordan and Ms. Vivian Fernández de Torrijos, First Lady of Panama.

Several UN agencies, UNICEF, UNESCO and the UN Postal Administration, unveiled their latest efforts to promote the Convention. Civil society was involved in multiple ways—a member of the International Disability Alliance CRPD Forum, Mr. William Rowland, facilitated the event, Chair of the IDA CRPD Forum Mr. Lex Grandia gave remarks, a member of the disability community played the harp to

open and close the event, and the closing "Call for Action: Breathing Life into the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" was presented by two members of the disability community.

The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol is a long-awaited moment on the path toward international human rights norms to truly be universal and applicable to persons with disabilities. The provisions of the Convention now need to be transformed into policies, programmes and practices that will have a real impact on the lives of persons with disabilities. At the 12 May event, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that "We must address the glaring inequalities experienced by persons with disabilities. We must counter discrimination and prejudice. We must deliver development that is truly for all. And we must convince more and more nations, organizations and individuals to join this cause." More information on the commemorative event for the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can be found at: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/>. Photo (from left to right): Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Acting President of the General Assembly Hjalmar W. Hannesson, and Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Mr. Sha Zukang.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM DESA AND OHCHR •

Building a Network of Civil Society Organizations

- The Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is building an online list of civil society organizations that include persons with disabilities in their work, in order to facilitate knowledge sharing and network building. If you would like your organization to be listed on the Enable website, kindly email enable@un.org with the following information by the end of June 2008 (with the Subject: civil society contacts): (1) Organization name, (2) Organization website address, (3) Country or region of activities. Please note that the following disclaimer will be included on the website: "The below contacts and information are provided as a convenience and for informational purposes only; they do not constitute endorsement of or an approval by the United Nations of any of the products, services, or opinions of the corporation, organization, or individual. The United Nations bears no responsibility for the accuracy, legality or content of their statements and opinions."

International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2008

- The 2008 theme of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Dignity and justice for all of us". Dignity and justice for all persons are established universal principles. Since its inception, the United Nations has recognized that the inherent dignity and the equal and



inalienable rights of all members of the human family are the foundations of freedom, justice and peace in the world. 2008 is a significant year in the international human rights movement given the entry into force on 3 May of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, legally binding instruments which set out the legal obligations of States to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). For more on the International Day, go to <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=109>. *Photo of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Ghana (photograph: Simon de Trey White)* from Action on Disability & Development.

The Human Rights Council Adopts Resolution on Disability

- On 27 March 2008, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on "The Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities," which requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a thematic study to enhance awareness and understanding of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, focusing on legal measures key for the ratification and effective implementation of the Convention, such as those relating to equality and non-discrimination". In June 2008, OHCHR will commence an open consultation with States, civil society organizations, intergovernmental organizations and national human rights institutions on the study. For more information, please contact Simon Walker at swalker@ohchr.org or Adriana Zarraluqui at azarraluqui@ohchr.org.

Human Rights Council held Special Event on Entry into Force of the Convention and Optional Protocol

- The Human Rights Council held a special event to mark the entry into force of the Convention and Optional Protocol on 6 June. The panel included four members of civil society: Lex Grandia, representing the IDA CRPD Forum, Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Theresia Degener and Luis Fernando Astorga. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour and the President of the Council, Ambassador Costea of Romania, also made statements. Council members, Inclusion International and Survivors Corps also spoke.

The President of the Council welcomed the entry into force of the Convention and Optional Protocol and the High Commissioner encouraged the Council to work towards universal ratification. Ms. Degener examined how the Convention protects the rights of women with disabilities both through a dedicated article as well as mainstreaming the human rights of women in other articles. Mr. Astorga outlined the Convention's requirements to ensure accessibility, emphasizing the importance of this principle to the enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities. Ms. McClain-Nhlapo highlighted the linkages between poverty and disability, noting how the failure to promote the rights of persons with disabilities is both a cause and effect of poverty, while also having an enormous negative impact on society and the economy. Mr.

Grandia shared the vision and dreams of persons with disabilities on how the Convention would create an inclusive world, observing that "The birth of this inclusive world for persons with disabilities will redefine humanity, reconstruct the human being and forever change the discourse on human rights".

The Special Event marked a further step in the Human Rights Council integrating the Convention and Optional Protocol. For more information, see: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/disability/>.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OTHER UN AGENCIES, FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES .

World Health Organization Establishes a Taskforce on Disability

- The WHO Director-General, acknowledging that the Convention will change the way WHO does work, established a Taskforce on Disability to lead the Organization's efforts. The Taskforce, which includes representatives from all levels of WHO, aims to ensure that WHO policies, programmes and projects are designed and implemented taking into account persons with disabilities. The Taskforce will also continue developing ways for persons with disabilities to take full advantage of WHO's employment opportunities, information and premises. Persons with disabilities will be fully involved in the process. For more information on the WHO meeting on disability and rehabilitation, contact Alana Officer at officera@who.int.
- In May and June 2008, regional consultations on the preliminary draft of the World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation were held in Costa Rica, Tanzania, Italy, and the Philippines. Each consultation brought together a diverse group of experts with complementary knowledge and experience, including persons with disabilities, from one or two of WHO's regions. Their general feedback, regional and cultural perspectives on the draft report, and the sources of regional information they identified will be key to ensuring that the final document is relevant in diverse contexts globally. The World Report will be launched in 2009. For more information on the "World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation," contact Alana Officer at officera@who.int.

UN Information Centre in Ukraine

- The UNDP and ILO Joint Programme on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities through Access to Employment was signed on 28 May 2008 between UNDP, ILO and Public Employment Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of Ukraine. The Programme objective is to facilitate a inclusion of persons with disabilities in the open labour market to safeguard their equal rights and opportunities. The specific objective is to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Public Employment Service and its partners in providing employment promotion services to Persons with Disabilities. The programme is planned to be implemented in 2008-2010.
- The 11 June Parliament Hearings on "Observing of the Rights of Persons with

"Disabilities in Ukraine" was conducted by the Parliament Committee on pensioners, veterans and persons with disabilities with support from the UN office in Ukraine. The discussion was based on results of monitoring respect for the rights of persons with disabilities, preparing recommendations regarding implementation of their rights, and facilitating the ratification of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the adaptation of Ukrainian legislation in accordance with international standards. The UN office in Ukraine in partnership with the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities presented and disseminated the Ukrainian edition of the manual for parliamentarians on rights of persons with disabilities to Members of Parliament, relevant ministries' executives, and civil society activists.



Launch of the version of the Ukrainian manual for parliamentarians in Ukraine.

UNDP Serbia

- In November 2007, the Citizens Involvement Fund (CIF) was established through the PRO Programme, an initiative of the European Union, the Swiss government, the Serbian government and municipalities in south-western Serbia to address the higher levels of poverty in these municipalities. UNDP is an implementing partner of this programme. Through CIF, four projects on disability are being supported. In Novi Pazar staff from local institutions will be taught sign language so they can better address the needs of those with severe hearing impairments. In Raska there is a project to assess the needs of persons with disabilities who live an isolated life and to encourage socialization. In Nova Varos, 19 workshops will teach persons with psycho-social disabilities how to produce tools to improve their quality of life, and possibly create revenue. There is awareness-raising campaign, particularly on accessibility, in Sjenica. Two outcomes of this programme will be a ramp at the post office and the first designated parking space for persons with disabilities.

PUBLICATIONS •

View these documents at 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.

World Bank: “Disability and Poverty: A Survey of World Bank Poverty Assessments and Implications,” 2008.

UPCOMING EVENTS •

19-20 June 2008: The second meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) to the Convention took place in Geneva. The IASG discussed a joint strategy and a plan of action to ensure a coordinated UN vision on work in relation to the Convention. The strategy and plan of action will focus on the six focus areas identified in the IASG Statement of Commitment: policies, programmes, research and knowledge-sharing, building capacity, accessibility and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The IASG also considered ways to develop guidelines for UN Country Teams to mainstream the Convention into UN country work.

16 September 2008: Opening of the UN General Assembly. The general debate is 23 September – 1 October 2008.

3 December 2008: The theme for this year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities is “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Dignity and justice for all of us”.

9-11 December 2008: The first Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Asia-Pacific Congress will be held 9-11 December at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. The Congress, jointly organized by WHO, UNESCAP and the Government of Thailand, will serve as the first meeting of CBR practitioners from countries in Asia and the Pacific. Participants will share knowledge, experience and developments in CBR related to the Biwako Millennium Framework (including Biwako+5), the Regional Decades of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For more information on the Congress, contact Chapal Khasnabis at khasnabisc@who.int or Somchai Rungsilp at somchai@apcdproject.org.

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 Celine-Andree Adotevi, Vittoria Beria, Patricia David, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, Vanessa Edwards, Akiko Ito, Sayre Nyce, Nicola Shepherd, Ann Syauta, Simon Walker, and Adriana Zarraluqui.

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