



**Statement of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Disability to the
Commission for Social Development**

to the

International Conference on Financing for Development

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**International Financing & Technical Cooperation in Disability Rights:
Rhetoric & Reality**

**Mr. President
Excellencies, Heads of Delegations
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I would like to thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of more than 600 million persons with disabilities who still suffer from the worst form of discrimination and abject poverty.

The adoption by the United Nations of the World Programme for Action on Disability in 1982 represented a turning point in history in terms of the international concern for disability. Since that date, disability has become an issue of discussion for all societies.

This concern became even more pronounced as the the United Nations adopted the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in unprecedented unanimity, as an expression of moral commitment on the part of all nations to work towards improving the conditions and quality of life of persons with disabilities in terms of their standing, their role and societies' perception on them, their rights and their full participation; in addition to their medical care, rehabilitation, and assistive devices. It was also a commitment to their right to accessibility, education, employment, dignity and family life...etc. All of these commitments placed upon governments an obligation to implement measures and procedures to allow the full and equal participation as all members of society.



These commitments prompted most of world's regions to adopt Disability Decades in order to adopt, channel and implement policies towards meeting the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

Fifteen years after the adoption of the Standard Rules and the success in adopting an International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the end of 2006, we still see that persons with disabilities around the world are suffering from discrimination and marginalization.

Through my own work as Special Rapporteur to the United Nations on Disability during the past 6 years and which included a Global Survey on the measures taken by governments to ensure equalization of opportunities; and country visits to assess that implementation on the ground; as well as meetings with disability organizations in more than 30 countries, the one major obstacles has been the lack of funding for the improvement of the situation of persons with disabilities—especially when it comes to basic rights such as medical care, education, employment and rehabilitation.

The most important measure that the world's civil and governmental organizations can take in moving towards the fulfilment of their commitment to the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities initiative on and to the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is to activate the principles of international responsibility and to invigorate international cooperation.

This means channelling appropriate technical and financial support and resources to the programmes, projects, and activities aimed at the empowerment of persons with disabilities, to enable them to enjoy and exercise their rights to full participation; to support their independence and self-sufficiency; to build their capacities; to remove all obstacles and barriers that hinder their full participation.

In reviewing the commitments made by Governments since the Monterrey meeting in 2002, and the measures implemented in accordance with those commitment, steps need to be taken to include financing programmes aimed at meeting the civic and developmental rights of persons with disabilities. Such measures would go a long way in reducing the suffering of 650 million persons with disabilities around the world, and their families—that often bear the sole responsibility for their care with little help from civil and governmental organizations whose purpose is to provide support, protection and services.

I would like to remind the Governments gathered here today of the consensus they reached in their Monterrey gathering in 2002, which stated that that the only way to move into the 21st century in a healthy way and "to advance into a fully inclusive and equitable global system" was through a "commitment to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable economic growth and promote sustainable development."



Allow me to point out to this gathering here that comprehensive social justice and sustainable development cannot be achieved if we overlook a segment of the world population which represents the poorest of the poor; who are the least represented in the labour market; the most exploited; and who live in environments and under conditions that the farthest possible from sustainability.

It is time to bridge the gap between what we say and what we do—between our rhetoric and our actions. It is time that we place all our resources in the service of those goals that we have stated as our priorities.

It is not possible that we should draft, sign, ratify and commit to agreements, treaties and agreements; use their rhetoric in our political speeches and manifestos without matching those words to policies and programmes; procedures and measures that need to be implemented on the ground.

I appeal to you today in this gathering to incorporate the issues of sustainable development to a segment of the population that is considered the poorest of the poor in the world—including their families and communities. There is no way that we can speak about efficient financing for development while at the same time marginalizing more than 600 million people and depriving them from receiving much needed financial support.