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International Campaign for Disability Rights

Exploratory Meeting

Embassy Suites
At The Chevy Chase Pavilion
Washington D.C.

Monday, May 21, 2001
12 p.m.

Proposed Agenda

12:00 - Welcome and Introductions

12:10 - Introductory Remarks
Lex Frieden

12:20 - Cir Presentation and Discussion
Dr. William K. Smith

12:50 - Additional Remarks
Honorable Judy Heumann

1:00 - General Discussion

1:30 - Conclusion and Next Steps

International Disability Rights Campaign (IDRC)
Committed to ensuring respect for the human rights of people with disabilities.

Mission: The ratification of an International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Background: The United Nations has recognized certain populations as being particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, and has developed corresponding instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to facilitate their protection under international law. These Conventions address a broad range of issues specific to the populations they seek to protect. Furthermore, they include specifications for strong, carefully mandated monitoring committees comprised of recognized experts in the field.

There is growing international consensus that the human rights of people with disabilities are not adequately protected under current international law. Estimates of the proportion of the world population with disabilities vary from 4% to more than 15%. Even using the lowest numbers, this amounts to hundreds of millions of people. The rights of people with disabilities are theoretically covered by the umbrella of universal non-discrimination principles in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These instruments, while legally binding, have not had the desired effect of securing the rights of people with disabilities, especially in countries where people with disabilities are severely socially and culturally marginalized. The monitoring bodies for these Conventions address some disability issues when reporting to States Parties, however those issues represent only a very small part of the broad scope of topics these committees are responsible for covering. The universal nature of such documents simply does not facilitate a concerted focus on populations with special needs. In order to accomplish that end, specific conventions, such as those mentioned above, have been deemed necessary.

Method: The mobilization and organization of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups to support and develop the Convention and effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

Goals:

- Develop language and policies to be included in the Convention
- Educate the media and the public concerning the need for the Convention
- Lobby United Nations Member States to support the treaty
- Develop monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure the efficacy of the treaty when ratified

Rationale: People with disabilities, and those who have significant involvement in their daily lives must guide the development of a Convention. Ad-hoc consultation by the UN will not ensure the treaty's quality and relevance. The disability community and its allies must organize a formal coalition with a unified voice and a commitment to sustained participation in order to become a relevant force in the development, ratification and subsequent oversight of the Convention.

Structure: A broad coalition organization of NGOs and civil society groups led by a Coordinating Committee comprised of representatives from 7-9 member organizations. An elected Chair will serve as spokesman for the group, run meetings and oversee working groups. Staff will be supplied by a coordinating organization. Working groups will be formed to address specific tasks encompassed by the mission of the coalition.

Roles:

IDRC Coordinating Committee (CC): A Coordinating Committee (CC) will direct the activities of the coalition. Members of the CC will provide strategic guidance and leadership to the coalition, as well as concrete assistance in specific areas. The CC will assist in the recruitment of new members to the coalition.

Chair: An elected Chair organization will provide the spokesman for the group who will run meetings, oversee working groups and facilitate functioning of the coordinating committee.

Coordinator: The coordinating organization will staff activities, manage internal communications, coordinate meetings, provide documentation, serve as fiscal agent, oversee the production of communications and awareness materials and provide leadership to development and fundraising efforts.

Working Groups: A working group is a sub-group of NGO's tasked by the Coordinating Committee to work in a specific area. A Chair leads working groups. Findings and recommendations of the working groups are submitted to the steering committee for approval.

IDRC Members: Lobby national UN delegations, member states and the media in support of the Convention and provide country or region-specific information on the status of disability rights

Country Campaigns: The Coordinating Committee will charter country campaigns. NGO's that wish to establish a country campaign will submit a proposal to the coordinating committee outlining their proposed plans, strategy and the rationale for their selection.

Strategy:

The first step will be to convene an exploratory meeting in Washington on May 21st to present and discuss preliminary ideas on the topic with selected leaders in the international and US disability community. This will be followed by a workshop in Chicago on June 14th at which time it is hoped that an organizational structure will be adopted. Once formed, the IDRC will formalize a comprehensive strategic plan. It is anticipated that soon after the IDRC has been launched, a US Campaign will be formed as the first "Country Campaign" member of the IDRC.

Beijing Declaration on the Rights of People with Disabilities in the New Century

Adopted on 12 March 2000 at the World NGO Summit on Disability

1. *We, the leaders of Disabled People's International, Inclusion International, Rehabilitation International, the World Blind Union and the World Federation of the Deaf, as well as national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of and for people with disabilities from all continents, have convened in Beijing from 10 to 12 March 2000 to develop a new century strategy for the full participation and equality of people with disabilities,*
2. *We recognize, with appreciation, that the last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed an increased awareness of issues faced by over 600 million people with disabilities, assisted in part by various United Nations instruments,*
3. *We express deep concern that such instruments and mandates have yet to create a significant impact on improving the lives of people with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities, who remain the most invisible and marginalized of all disadvantaged social groups,*
4. *We emphasize that the continued exclusion of people with disabilities from the mainstream development process is a violation of fundamental rights and an indictment of humankind at the inception of the new century,*
5. *We share the conviction that the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society requires our solidarity in working towards an international convention that legally binds nations, to reinforce the moral authority of the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities,*
6. *We believe that the inception of the new century is an opportune time for people with diverse disabilities and their organizations, and other civic organizations, local and national governments, members of the United Nations system and other inter-governmental bodies, as well as the private sector, to collaborate closely in an inclusive and wide consultative process aimed at the development and adoption of an international convention to promote and protect the rights of people with disabilities, and enhance equal opportunities for participation in mainstream society,*
7. *We therefore urge all heads of state and government, public administrators, local authorities, members of the United Nations system, people with disabilities, civic organizations that participate in the development process, and socially responsible private sector organizations, to immediately initiate the process for an international convention, including by raising it in all forthcoming international forums, especially the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Social Development, the NGO Millennium Forum, the United Nations Millennium Assembly and related preparatory meetings,*
8. *We further urge all participants in this process to actively facilitate the adoption of such a convention, which should address, inter alia, the following areas of priority concern:*
 - (a) Improvement of the overall quality of life of people with diverse disabilities, and their upliftment from deprivation, hardship and poverty;
 - (b) Education, training, remunerative work, and participation in decision-making processes at all levels;
 - (c) Elimination of discriminatory attitudes and practices, as well as information, legal and infrastructural barriers;
 - (d) Increased allocations of resources to ensure the equal participation of people with disabilities;
9. *We hereby send out a call to action to all concerned with equality and human dignity, to join together in widespread efforts embracing national capitals, towns and cities, remote villages, and United Nations forums, to ensure the adoption of an international convention on the rights of all people with disabilities,*
10. *We commit our respective organizations to strive for a legally binding international convention on the rights of all people with disabilities to full participation and equality in society.*



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Center for

Disability Watch

International
Rehabilitation

Disability Watch is a proposed initiative of the Center for International Rehabilitation and the International Campaign for Disability Rights (IDRC) to establish the need for a United Nations treaty on the rights of persons with disabilities and subsequently monitor implementation and international compliance. More generally, the goal of Disability Watch is to help assess the efforts of the international community to ensure the rights of people with disabilities. It aims to bring together non-governmental organizations in a coordinated, systematic and sustained way to document progress, problems and barriers experienced by people with disabilities around the world and to promote the use of international humanitarian law as a means of effectively addressing those barriers. Disability watch is a proposed effort by civil society to hold governments accountable to their obligations under international law in regard to people with disabilities.

351 East Huron Street

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Chicago, Illinois 60611

USA

The main elements of Disability Watch are a core group of coordinating organizations, a global reporting network, a central database and an annual report. The Disability Watch mission will be accomplished through extensive collection, analysis and distribution of publicly available information. In some cases it will entail investigative missions. Disability watch will utilize the ICDR campaign network, but it will also draw other elements of civil society including human rights organizations, journalists, academic and research institutions.

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Dear ,

The Center for International Rehabilitation is a Chicago-based non-governmental organization that develops programs and products for people with disabilities worldwide. The CIR would like to invite you, as a representative of your organization, to participate in an exploratory meeting to be held in Dublin Ireland during the month of September, 2001. The purpose of this meeting is to explore the formation of an international coalition of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups. The mission of the coalition is the passage of a United Nations Convention on the rights of people with disabilities. The proposed framework for the coalition is modeled on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which the CIR has participated in for number of years.

The Dublin meeting will last for two days. We have attached some background materials that will provide you with further information. In addition we have included a list of the invitees we hope will participate. Please let us know if you will require assistance with travel and lodging expenses.

If you are able to join us, please contact Deanna Kepka at <d-kepka@cirnetwork.org> at your earliest possible convenience. Alternatively you may contact us by phone, fax or mail.

Thank you for your interest in consideration. I hope to see you in Dublin.

Sincerely,

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