

Opening Statement

By
Professor Emeritus Ron McCallum AO
Chair
United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Final Review of the Implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012

Ministerial Segment
Sondgo Convensia
Incheon
Republic of Korea
Thursday, 1 November 2012

Your Excellency Mr. Rim Chemin, Minister of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea,

Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP,

Ms. Jang Myung Sook, Standing Member of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Civil society partners,

My sisters and brothers with disabilities,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a huge honour for me to be here with you today. Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the Government of the Republic of Korea and ESCAP for convening this most significant regional Meeting. I am heartened to see the very high-level of representation of ESCAP member States at this Meeting as well as the wide civil society participation.

We are making history today in Incheon, Republic of Korea. This Meeting is held every decade with the aim of assessing progress - and also noting the remaining gaps - in the building of a disability inclusive society in the Asia-Pacific region.

On behalf of myself, and all members of the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and especially those of us who live in this region, may I welcome and applaud ESCAP member States for their leadership in the recent proclamation of the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities for the period

2013 to 2022.

This Incheon regional Meeting serves as the launch pad for the new Decade with the anticipated adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022.

As the Chair of the CRPD Committee, allow me to explain how the outcome of this Meeting will assist us in our work. The CRPD Committee is one of the ten United Nations human rights treaty bodies. Its primary function is to monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the countries which have ratified the CRPD. Since the CRPD came into force on 3 May 2008, that is four and a half years ago, some 123 nations have ratified the Convention. In fact, in the history of United Nations human rights treaties, it is the second fastest Convention to receive so many ratifications, with the fastest being the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

This Meeting will also adopt the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities. This strategy has ten interrelated goals, together with 26 targets and 50 indicators. The Strategy will enable governments in this region, and their civil society partners, to measure the improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities. The Incheon Strategy of measurement will greatly assist the CRPD Committee in its monitoring work. We will be able to use these indicators to assess, in our monitoring, how countries in this region have improved the living conditions of persons with disabilities.

While ratifications of the CRPD have been rapid throughout our globe, in this region more work needs to be done so that all Asian and Pacific countries can ratify the CRPD. The work which will flow from this new Decade for we, persons with disabilities, will improve the quality of the lives of persons with disabilities and their families throughout this most populous region. It is my hope that, very soon, it will be possible to say that all nations in the Asian and Pacific region have signed up to the CRPD.

The slogan for we persons with disabilities is "Nothing about us without us". Therefore, I am delighted to recount that the regional preparatory process initiated by ESCAP for this Incheon meeting has been an inclusive one where civil society and, we persons with disabilities, have played significant roles in developing the Incheon Strategy. In other words, the Incheon Strategy has been enriched through the participation of persons who are living with disabilities and their disabled people's organisations.

I look forward to the fruitful outcomes which will flow from this High-level Intergovernmental Meeting, and express my heartfelt congratulations to all of you for your leadership and commitment to making a difference for the 650 million persons with disabilities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Professor Emeritus Ron McCallum AO

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