

**High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the
Final Review of the Implementation of the
Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012
Incheon, Republic of Korea**

**Senior Officials Segment
29 October 2012
Opening session**

**Statement
by
Senator Monthian Buntan**

Your Excellency, Mr. Park Yong Hyun, Assistant Minister of Health and Welfare, Government of the Republic of Korea,

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

Mr. Song Young Wook, Chairman of the Korean Foundation for Persons with Disabilities,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I stand before you, a village boy from the lush green rice fields of Northern Thailand.

I am a senator in the Thai Parliament. I seize every opportunity open to me in this position to mobilize the support of government entities that have long been indifferent to disability inclusion.

I use the mechanism of the Parliamentary Subcommittee to examine various sectoral budget plans, which has led to the inclusion of disability perspectives in those plans.

As chairperson of Subcommittee on Disability with in the Standing on Social Development, I regularly call on provincial authorities and other government agencies to discuss barriers to action, thereby facilitating and encouraging the inclusion of disability perspectives.

As Vice Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Rights, and Chairperson of its Subcommittee on Freedom of Expression, I work closely with government colleagues responsible for telecommunications, broadcasting and other forms of the public media, aiming to achieve more accessibility and more disability-inclusive information society.

Since I am extremely fond of cutting edge technology, I confess that this is one aspect of my multifarious duties that I particularly enjoy.

The inroads made towards eliminating discrimination against persons with disabilities are a source of most satisfaction in my daily struggles.

Just a month ago at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, I was elected as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with the highest number of votes.

And, I am the father of a trilingual teenage fan of Korean knowledge cartoon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have no eye sight.

But, with clear vision, strong commitment and determination, I have walked the long and winding road through two consecutive Asian and Pacific Decades of Disabled Persons.

With government colleagues and friends in the disability community from across the region, I joined in the extensive consultations that started from June 2010 onwards to craft the essential elements of a strategic guide for the new Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013 to 2022.

I thank the secretariat for its work in supporting both governments and civil society in this important endeavour.

The draft ministerial declaration and Incheon strategy to make the right real for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific is a truly exciting and dynamic document.

The emphasis of the draft Incheon Strategy on generating evidence, as a basis for informed policy making, is precisely what my legislative work experience confirms.

The draft Incheon Strategy points the way forward to unlocking the power inherent in my sisters and brothers with diverse disabilities, to fulfil our collective mission of living our lives on an equal basis with everyone else.

So that the privileges that too few of us enjoy today will be the rule, not the exception.

When you read the draft Incheon Strategy, please see it as the golden key for opening the gateway for 650 million of us to have choices in life that are now denied most of us.

The road ahead will not be easy. It demands of us great courage, determination and commitment.

The fact that so many governments of the ESCAP membership have gathered here to join hands in crafting this golden key is most promising.

I am confident that, together, we shall be worthy of the mantle that we have inherited to maintain, indeed reinforce, the Asia-Pacific leadership in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

Thus, permit me to conclude by sharing with you my motto:
Let us all give up on giving up!

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