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High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the
Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012

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**BIWAKO PLUS FIVE:
FURTHER EFFORTS TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE, BARRIER-FREE AND
RIGHTS-BASED SOCIETY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

*As adopted by the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and
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I. PREAMBLE

1. The Asian and Pacific region is the home to two thirds of the 650 million persons with disabilities in the world. In order to ensure greater recognition of their rights, Governments and other stakeholders in the Asian and Pacific region have taken a number of measures. By its resolution 58/4 of 22 May 2002 on promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region in the twenty-first century, the Commission extended the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002,¹ for another decade, that is, from 2003 to 2012. Since then, a number of initiatives have been launched in line with the extended Decade. Among them was the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society in Asia and the Pacific,² which was adopted by the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, held in Otsu, Shiga, Japan, in October 2002, as the defining policy guideline for the new Decade. The extension of the Decade carried forward the goal of the previous Decade, 1993-2002, and the commitment made by Governments signing the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region:³ the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities.

2. The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action builds on both the achievements and the lessons learned from the implementation of the policy guideline adopted for the previous Decade: the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002 (E/ESCAP/APDDP/2). It emphasizes the paradigm shift from a charity-based approach to a rights-based approach for the development of persons with disabilities. It also promotes a barrier-free, inclusive and rights-based society, which embraces the diversity of human beings. Further, it enables and advances the socio-economic contribution of its members and ensures the realization of those rights by persons with disabilities. The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action identifies 7 priority areas and 4 major strategic areas, with 21 targets and 17 strategies. Through Commission resolution 59/3 of 4 September 2003, Governments of countries in Asia and the Pacific, in collaboration with other stakeholders, such as United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and civil society organizations, reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action. In its resolution 61/8 of 18 May 2005 on the mid-point review of the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, the Commission requested the Executive Secretary to hold a high-level intergovernmental meeting on the midpoint review of the Decade in 2007.

¹ See Commission resolution 48/3 of 23 April 1992.

² See Commission resolution 59/3 of 4 September 2003 (for the text of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, see E/ESCAP/APDDP/4/Rev.1).

³ Adopted at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Launch the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, held in Beijing, 1-5 December 1992. See also Commission resolution 49/6 of 29 April 1993 on the Proclamation and Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002.

3. One of the most significant developments during the first five years of the extended Decade was the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol⁴ to the Convention. This marked the beginning of a new era in the global efforts to promote and safeguard the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of persons with disabilities, and to promote disability-inclusive development and international cooperation. In adopting the Convention, the General Assembly called upon States to consider signing and ratifying the Convention and the Optional Protocol as a matter of priority. The Convention represents the latest thinking of the States Members of the United Nations about this issue. It recognizes that the promotion of the full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of their human rights and fundamental freedoms and of full participation by persons with disabilities will result in their enhanced sense of belonging and in significant advances in the human, social and economic development of society and the eradication of poverty. Building on regional experiences in the formulation and implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, members and associate members of the Commission contributed to the global drafting process through a series of efforts that included the submission, in 2003, of proposals and a regional draft entitled the “Bangkok Draft” to the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. Both the Convention and the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action pursue the common goal of achieving a barrier-free, inclusive and rights-based society. The effective implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action will contribute significantly to the implementation of the Convention, and the steps taken by the States that ratify the Convention will contribute to the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action by those States.

4. The first five years of the extended Decade witnessed other significant developments as well. For example, in 2004, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) published a joint position paper⁵ in which they expounded the rights-based approach to community-based rehabilitation and services. The World Summit on the Information Society adopted the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society⁶ on 18 November 2005, which addressed the importance of universal design and assistive technologies that promote access for all persons, including those with disabilities. WHO addressed the need to research and implement the most effective measures to prevent disabilities in collaboration with communities and other sectors.⁷ The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, in adopting the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015,

⁴ General Assembly resolution 61/106 of 13 December 2006, annexes I and II.

⁵ International Labour Office, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and World Health Organization, *CBR: A Strategy for Rehabilitation, Equalization of Opportunities, Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2004).

⁶ See A/60/687.

⁷ World Health Assembly resolution WHA58.23 of 25 May 2005 on disability, including prevention, management and rehabilitation.

Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,⁸ recommended, inter alia, the strengthening of the implementation of social safety-net mechanisms to assist the poor, the elderly and the disabled.

5. Research for the midpoint review shows that the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action has resulted in many positive developments. Increasing numbers of Governments in the region have shown their commitment to disability issues by signing the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities.⁹ Thus far, 46 Governments have become signatories. Many Governments have also taken steps to incorporate the concept of the rights of persons with disabilities into their constitutions, legislation, national plans of action, and policies and programmes. Persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific have proven their capability in this regard. They have addressed their needs and engaged in policy discourse during the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They have also become increasingly active in the decision-making process at the regional and national levels. An increasing number of international aid and development cooperation agencies have started to explore and adopt “disability-inclusive development”, which focuses on mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities into general development policymaking and operations.

6. Despite such progress, challenges and obstacles still remain. The lack of availability and the quality of demographic data and socio-economic indicators concerning disability continue to be major problems. Many Governments and other stakeholders report that the lack of financial and human resources, technical knowledge and capacities hinder their implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action. Although the Asian and Pacific region enjoys steady improvement in the development of disability policy, the implementation of such policies has to be ensured and their impact measured. While more persons with disabilities are becoming increasingly empowered, due attention should be paid to marginalized groups, such as those with psychosocial disabilities, intellectual disabilities or multiple disabilities and those living in rural and remote areas. ESCAP is also tasked with promoting the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action in subregions such as North and Central Asia and mainstreaming the disability perspective in subregional intergovernmental mechanisms. During the last five years, the efforts being made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals have been reviewed vigorously. The Goals relating to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education have been translated into targets for two of the seven priority areas of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action. Later, the rights of persons with disabilities were specifically recognized in the 2005 World Summit Outcome,¹⁰ as the attention they received in the Millennium Development Goals had not been adequate from a disability perspective. Natural disasters and other situations entailing heightened risk, including armed conflict, exacerbate the physical,

⁸ A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap.I, resolution 2.

⁹ E/ESCAP/902, annex I.

¹⁰ General Assembly resolution 60/1 of 16 September 2005.

institutional, attitudinal and informational barriers facing all people, but in particular, persons with disabilities. Such situations underline the need for better disability-inclusive disaster management with regard to both natural and man-made disasters.

7. In taking forward the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, ministerial-level representatives of countries in the region discussed and finalized the present document at the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 September 2007. The Biwako Plus Five outcome draws upon the findings of the five-year review, taking into consideration global developments, the emerging needs of the region with regard to disability and the challenges and obstacles which need to be overcome. It supplements the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action in the hope of making a significant contribution to the enhanced implementation of the Framework over the remaining five years of the Decade (2008-2012) by promoting the creation of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for all.

II. NATURE AND OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES OF BIWAKO PLUS FIVE

8. Biwako Plus Five supplements the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action. In terms of content, Biwako Plus Five distinguishes itself from the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action by (a) providing additional actions in the 7 priority areas, (b) reconfiguring the 4 strategy areas into 5 areas with 25 additional strategies, and (c) adding 3 strategies under “cooperation and support and monitoring and review”.

9. Biwako Plus Five should be implemented on the basis of the same principles and policy directions delineated in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action. However, the following three aspects should be amplified:

(a) First, Governments shall, within the limit of their economic capacity and development, take appropriate measures to devise national strategies and action plans for the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five. Governments should recognize the importance of international cooperation and partnership, in support of national efforts, including through the transfer of resources and technologies, as appropriate;

(b) Second, partnership among different stakeholders, namely, Governments, representatives of disabled people's organizations, international, regional and national non-governmental organizations, development organizations and agencies, and the private sector, as appropriate, should be promoted in all relevant activities, including research, data collection, needs assessment, policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, capacity-building and awareness-raising;

(c) Third, the diversity of persons with disabilities should be respected not only because they are the targets of policies, programmes and projects but also because they are partners in the decision-making process concerning disability as well as implementers and evaluators of projects and policies.

III. PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION UNDER THE BIWAKO MILLENNIUM FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

10. The Biwako Millennium Framework for Action contained 21 targets categorized under 7 priority areas. Although the dates for achieving targets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 16, 17 and 18 were set before 2007, the Governments and other stakeholders that have not yet attained those targets may need to strengthen their efforts in order to achieve them as soon as possible.

11. Further efforts need to be made in order to achieve those targets where progress has been found to be inadequate and where action has been lagging. The following are additional actions that may help countries to achieve the targets under each of the priority areas.

A. Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations

Actions required

12. Governments at all levels are encouraged to support:

(a) The development of organizations for persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations at the local and national levels, and the promotion of their networking at the regional, subregional and interregional levels, paying particular attention to the self-help organizations of persons with intellectual disabilities, psychosocial disabilities and multiple disabilities;

(b) The participation of persons with disabilities in the political and civil processes as well as in the development, implementation and monitoring of economic and social policies and programmes at all levels;

(c) The development of young men and women with disabilities as leaders.

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