

Disability Rights Convention

# Ratification Campaign Handbook

Rehabilitation, Promote, Protect and Ensure Full and Equal Enjoyment of Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities, Independence, Equality of Opportunity, Accessibility, Awareness-Raising, Implementation, Inclusion, Disabilities, Autonomy, Personal Mobility, Convention, Dignity, Promote, Convention, Rehabilitation, Ratification, International Cooperation, Non-Discrimination, Full Effective Participation, Equality, Inclusion, Respect for Differences, Independence, Campaign, Equality of Opportunity, Rehabilitation, Promote, Protect and Ensure Full and Equal Enjoyment of Human Rights for Persons with Disabilities, Independence, Equality of Opportunity, Accessibility, Awareness-Raising, Implementation, Inclusion, Disabilities, Autonomy, Personal Mobility, Dignity, Convention, International

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# Disability Rights Convention Ratification Campaign Handbook

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# Introduction to Convention Ratification Campaign Handbook

## What will this Handbook help you do?

1. Be knowledgeable about the Disability Rights Convention (Convention).
2. Be an effective advocate for ratification of the Convention.
3. Mobilize support for ratification with various partners.
4. Engage media to publicize and get public support for the ratification.

## What is in the Handbook?

The Handbook contains three sections. Each section includes easy-to-read and easy-to-use information, including removable samples and handouts found in the pockets following each section. These sample advocacy tools can be modified or edited according to your specific needs. All documents can also be found on the LSN website ([www.landminesurvivors.org](http://www.landminesurvivors.org)) and can be downloaded.

## SECTION 1: Convention Information

This section will provide you with the knowledge necessary to conduct advocacy activities to ensure ratification of the Convention by your country. It gives general background information about what a human rights convention is and how one is developed. It includes background information on the Convention process and answers to some frequently asked questions. This information will help you be an articulate advocate for the ratification of the Convention, answer questions, and form persuasive arguments in support of ratification. Here you can also find the full text of the Convention in a convenient booklet format.

## SECTION 2: Ratification Advocacy Tools

This section contains hands-on tools that will help you effectively plan and implement your ratification campaign. It contains planning tools, sample letters and other materials you can modify and distribute as part of your advocacy efforts. Here you will also find information on the ratification process, what it means, and a sample ratification process.

## SECTION 3: Media Tools

Media advocacy is key to successfully publicizing the Convention to gather support from the general public. In this section, you can find tools to help mobilize the public in support of the Convention by using various media sources. The tools that are included will help you get journalists interested in your story, organize a press conference and prepare press releases.

**Good luck with campaigning!**

# Convention Information

## *An Introduction*

Effective advocacy begins with knowledge. You must have information related to the Convention at your fingertips so that you can educate your advocacy targets about the Convention, answer questions and make persuasive arguments that will ensure greater support for ratification.

To facilitate your learning, you will find the following information in this section:

- 1. An Introduction to Human Rights Conventions** will familiarize you with human rights generally as well as where they can be found in international law. It also describes how a new United Nations (UN) Convention, including the Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, is developed.
- 2. Convention Process Timeline** gives you an overview of the most important milestones in the development of the Convention.
- 3. Convention At-A-Glance** provides short explanations of the meaning of each article in the Convention and the Optional Protocol.
- 4. Convention in Plain Language** is the text of the Convention in easy-to-understand language. This information will help you articulate what it is that the Convention says in a way that the general public will be able to understand.
- 5. Optional Protocol to the Convention** provides you with information on the power of the monitoring mechanism of the Convention to hear individual complaints of violations of human rights under the Convention in easy-to-understand language.
- 6. Frequently Asked Questions** contains answers to some of the questions that you are most likely to face in your advocacy activities.

In the pocket, you can find the full text of the Convention in booklet form for easy reference.

# An Introduction to Human Rights Conventions

## WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Human rights are rights a person has simply because he or she is a human being. Another definition for human rights is *those basic needs without which people cannot live in dignity*. To violate someone's human rights is to treat that person as though she or he were not a human being. To advocate human rights is to demand that the human dignity of all people be respected.

Human rights are inalienable: you cannot lose these rights any more than you can cease to be a human being.

Human rights are indivisible: you cannot be denied a right because someone decides it is "less important" or "non-essential."

Human rights are interdependent: all human rights are part of a complementary framework. For example, your ability to participate in your government is directly affected by your right to express yourself, to get an education, or even to obtain the necessities of life like food and shelter.

## WHERE ARE HUMAN RIGHTS FOUND?

Although the roots lie in traditions of many cultures, rights for every member of the human family were first articulated in 1948 in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The thirty articles of the Declaration form a comprehensive statement covering economic, social, cultural, political, and civil rights. Its Preamble eloquently asserts the fundamental principle that –

*[R]ecognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.*

However, in international law a declaration like the UDHR is a statement of intent or a set of principles; it is not legally binding document. Therefore over the last fifty years the UN has built on the foundation of the UDHR by developing a framework of human rights treaties (also called conventions or covenants), which are legally binding on the countries that ratify them.

The most general of the human rights treaties are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which were adopted by the UN in 1966. These two Covenants together with the UDHR make up what is known as the International Bill of Rights.

In addition, the UN has adopted more than twenty other human rights treaties. These include conventions to prevent and prohibit specific abuses (e.g., torture and genocide) and to protect that are in especially vulnerable situations, (e.g., refugees, women, racial minorities, children, migrant workers), and importantly, a convention that promotes and protects the rights of people with disabilities.

In Europe, the Americas, and Africa, regional systems for the protection and promotion of human rights complement the international system:

- The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950)
- The American Convention on Human Rights (1978)
- The African Charter of Human and People's Rights (1981)

The national legal codes and constitutions of many countries also guarantee and protect the rights of citizens. Human rights differ from these mainly in that they apply to all people everywhere, regardless of their citizenship.

## PRINCIPAL HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR), 1948

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND  
POLITICAL RIGHTS, 1966

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC,  
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, 1966

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION  
OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, 1966

CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS  
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, 1979

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, 1989

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANT WORKERS  
AND THE MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES, 1990

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS  
WITH DISABILITIES, 2006

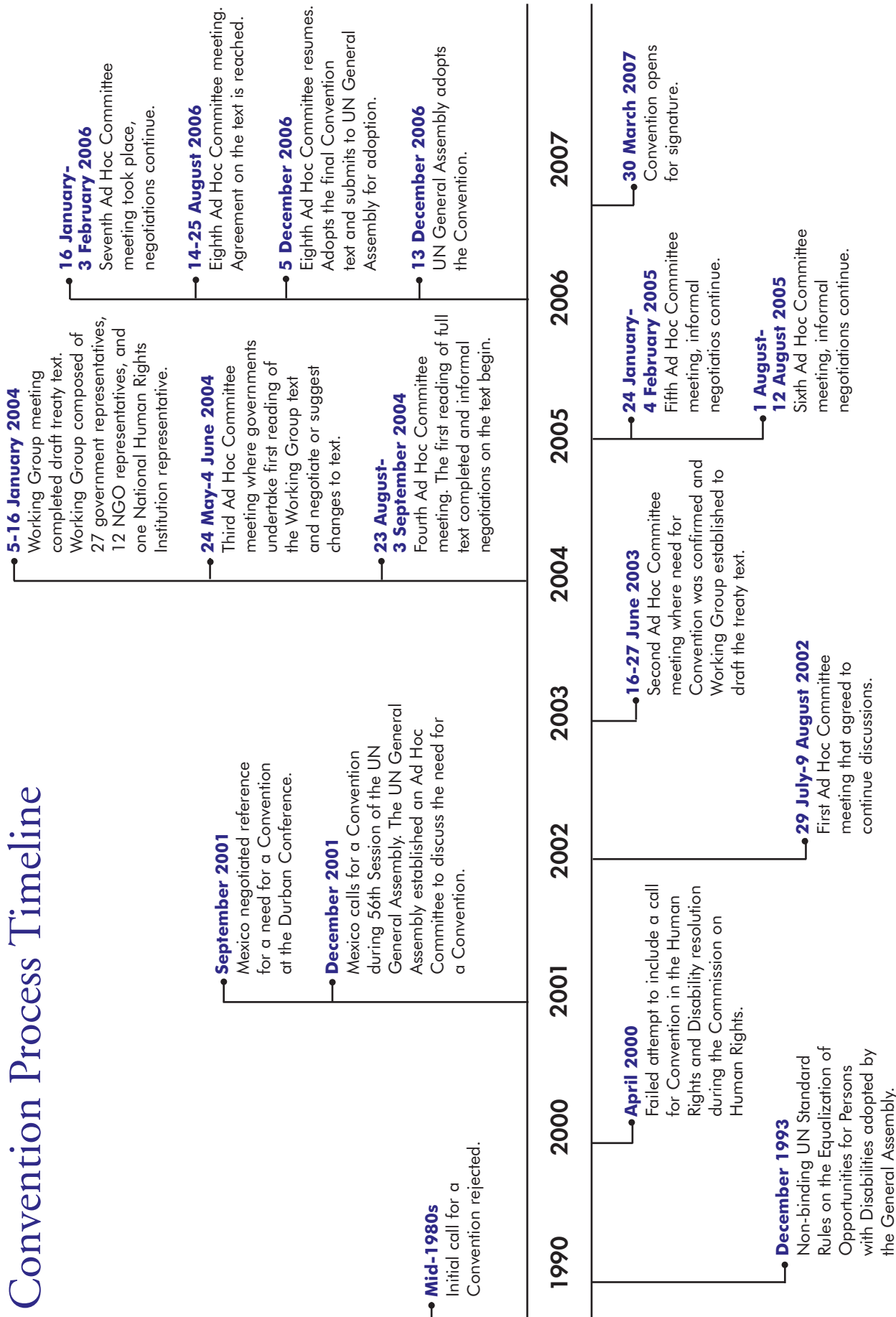
FOR FULL TEXT OF THE TREATIES, GO TO:  
**<http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/index.htm>**

## HOW IS A NEW UN CONVENTION CREATED?

The evolution of a UN convention from hopes and ideals to legally binding law is a lengthy process that begins and ends with the advocacy of people who care about the issue. Each stage of development can take many months or even many years to accomplish:

1. **Advocated** by groups concerned about an issue. Usually working in coalition, advocates lobby UN representatives to bring the issue before the General Assembly.
2. **Recommended** by a resolution of the UN General Assembly for consideration and establishment of a committee/working group to draft a text of the convention.
3. **Drafted** by working groups. Working groups consist of government representatives of UN member states, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Every article of the draft text is then debated until consensus is reached on its content. In this way a final draft is achieved for submission to the General Assembly.
4. **Adopted** by vote of the UN General Assembly. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted on 13 December 2006.
5. **Signed** by UN member states. When member states sign the convention, they are indicating that they have begun the process required by their government for ratification. In signing, they also are agreeing to refrain from acts that would be contrary to the objectives of the convention.
6. **Ratified** by UN member states. When a member state ratifies a convention, it signifies its intention to comply with the specific provisions and obligations of the document. It takes on the responsibility to see that its national laws are in agreement with the convention. There is a process by which states can ratify a convention, but indicate their reservations about specific articles with which they disagree.
7. **Entered into force.** A convention goes into effect when a certain number of member states have ratified it. For example, the Disability Rights Convention will come into force for the ratifying countries one month after 20 ratifications have been deposited.
8. **Monitored and advocated.** The ratifying government must report regularly to the administrative body created by the convention on how it is implementing the convention. Concerned activists educate the public and monitor government implementation of the convention. This final stage continues indefinitely.

# Convention Process Timeline



# Convention At-A-Glance

**PREAMBLE** Explains why the Convention is needed and lists other human rights instruments that helped formed the basis for this Convention.

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**ARTICLE 1 Purpose** Describes what the Convention seeks to achieve: the promotion, protection and full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by people with disabilities.

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**ARTICLE 2 Definitions** Explains meaning of some terms used for this Convention.

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**ARTICLE 3 General Principles** Describes the fundamental concepts that should guide interpretation of the Convention obligations and are binding in of themselves.

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**ARTICLE 4 General Obligations** Broad measures that countries have to undertake to be able to implement the Convention.

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**ARTICLE 5 Equality and Non-Discrimination** Affirms that people with disabilities must be treated fairly, which may require specific measures.

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**ARTICLE 6 Women with Disabilities** A specific focus on women with disabilities, particularly highlighting that women and girls are subject to multiple discrimination.

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**ARTICLE 7 Children with Disabilities** A specific focus on children with disabilities, particularly highlighting the principle of best interests of the child.

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**ARTICLE 8 Awareness Raising** Measures that should be taken to highlight disability rights in society.

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**ARTICLE 9 Accessibility** Ways in which communications and information systems, transport, buildings and other structures can be used, entered or reached.

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**ARTICLE 10 Right to Life** People with disabilities have the same right as others to live without interference.

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- ARTICLE 11 Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies** A country's obligation to comply with other obligations in international law, such as the laws of war. It emphasizes that in certain situations, such as armed conflict or natural disasters, people with disabilities may need additional measures to secure their safety.
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- ARTICLE 12 Equal Recognition Before the Law** People with disabilities have the same standing as others to exercise their capacity.
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- ARTICLE 13 Access to Justice** People with disabilities have the same opportunity as others to participate in law enforcement procedures.
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- ARTICLE 14 Liberty and Security of the Person** People with disabilities enjoy the same freedom as others to act. Moreover, they enjoy the same level of protection or safety against threats to human rights, such as arbitrary detention, physical harm, and food deprivation.
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- ARTICLE 15 Freedom from Torture or Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment** A country is obligated to prevent any acts by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person. There is also a prohibition on involuntary medical or scientific experimentation.
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- ARTICLE 16 Freedom from Exploitation, Violence and Abuse** People with disabilities must be protected from economic, physical and mental mistreatment. If mistreatment occurs, then all measures need to be taken to ensure recovery.
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- ARTICLE 17 Protecting the Integrity of the Person** A country has the obligation to protect the inviolability of the individual.
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- ARTICLE 18 Liberty of Movement and Nationality** People with disabilities have the same freedom as others to change one's country or home, cross borders, and obtain citizenship. Children with disabilities need to be registered at birth.
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- ARTICLE 19 Living Independently and Being Included in the Community** A country has the obligation to ensure that people with disabilities can live in society autonomously.
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- ARTICLE 20 Personal Mobility** People with disabilities shall have necessary assistive devices, technologies and mobility aids to facilitate movement.
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**ARTICLE 21 Freedom of Expression and Opinion, and Access to Information** A country will guarantee that people with disabilities enjoy the ability to share thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or personality, through verbal or non-verbal means. This obligation also extends to receiving information in accessible modes and formats. Sign language should be recognized and promoted.

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**ARTICLE 22 Respect for Privacy** People with disabilities' lives shall be honoured, appreciated and treated with dignity.

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**ARTICLE 23 Respect for the Home and the Family** People with disabilities' choices regarding where they live, how they live, and with whom they live, shall be be honoured, appreciated and treated with dignity.

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**ARTICLE 24 Education** Equal access to the life-long learning process is guaranteed, including in primary, secondary, tertiary education, and vocational institutions. Necessary measures to facilitate access should be undertaken. Training of professionals is essential, as well as hiring teachers with disabilities.

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**ARTICLE 25 Health** People with disabilities have equal access to the same standard of health care and health care services, including health insurance, to ensure their physical, mental and social well-being.

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**ARTICLE 26 Habilitation and Rehabilitation** A country has an obligation to ensure that people with disabilities are equipped with the means to achieve optimal functioning.

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**ARTICLE 27 Work and Employment** People with disabilities have equal access to a means to livelihood. In addition, countries have the obligation to promote livelihood opportunities.

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**ARTICLE 28 Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection** People with disabilities and their families are guaranteed access to food, shelter, clothing and drinking water. In addition, they have the same access as others to governmental safety nets.

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**ARTICLE 29 Participation in Political and Public Life** People with disabilities are entitled to be represented or participate in government and other civic activities.

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**ARTICLE 30 Participation in Cultural Life, Recreation, Leisure and Sport** People with disabilities have equal access to play, relaxation, amusement and physical pastime.

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**ARTICLE 31 Statistics and Data Collection** A country is obligated to gather disability-related information to assist in the Convention implementation. Any information gathering must comply with ethical standards.

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**ARTICLE 32 International Cooperation** Bilateral and multilateral partnerships are essential to support the Convention's implementation. Donor countries should ensure that a disability perspective is included in development aid policy and practice.

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**ARTICLE 33 National Implementation and Monitoring** A country is required to have disability focal point in government to focus on the Convention's implementation. A coordinating mechanism is also desirable. The Convention should be monitored by an independent mechanism, such as a national human rights institution. Civil society, particularly people with disabilities, must be included in monitoring the Convention's implementation.

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**ARTICLE 34 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** A 12 member committee of independent experts (Committee) monitors countries' implementation of the Convention. (The number of experts will go up to 18 when there are 60 ratifications.) The members should come from different regions, and there should be both disability and balanced gender representation.

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**ARTICLE 35 Reports by States Parties** Countries must provide periodic information to the Committee on how they are complying with their Convention obligations.

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**ARTICLE 36 Consideration of Reports** The Committee reviews the information, provides feedback to the country and makes its suggestions public. If a country does not provide information, then the Committee can provide recommendations based on other reliable information.

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**ARTICLE 37 Cooperation between States Parties and the Committee** Countries agree to collaborate with the Committee. Partnerships at multilateral and bilateral levels should be promoted.

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**ARTICLE 38 Relationship of the Committee with other Bodies** The Committee cooperates with the UN and other agencies and civil society in its monitoring work.

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**ARTICLE 39 Report of the Committee** The Committee provides information on its work to the UN every two years.

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**ARTICLE 40** **Conference of States Parties** Countries that are parties to the Convention meet regularly, or at least every two years.

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**ARTICLE 41** **Depositary** Ratifications are deposited with the UN Secretary General.

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**ARTICLE 42** **Signature** Countries can sign the Convention beginning on 30 March 2007.

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**ARTICLE 43** **Consent to be Bound** Once the Convention comes into force, countries or regional organizations can still become members by signaling their consent to be bound.

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**ARTICLE 44** **Regional Integration Organizations** Organizations to which its member states have delegated power may be a party to the Convention. The European Union is an example.

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**ARTICLE 45** **Entry into Force** The Convention is operative one month after 20 ratifications have been deposited.

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**ARTICLE 46** **Reservations** A country is allowed to state that it does not wish to be bound by certain aspects of the Convention, unless this is inconsistent with the Convention's object and purpose.

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**ARTICLE 47** **Amendments** The Convention can be changed if two thirds of countries party to the Convention agree.

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**ARTICLE 48** **Denunciation** A country can decide to no longer be party by giving written notice.

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**ARTICLE 49** **Accessible Format** The Convention should be available in accessible formats, such as Braille.

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**ARTICLE 50** **Authentic Texts** English, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Spanish and French are considered official language texts.

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## **OPTIONAL PROTOCOL**

An individual complaint mechanism if a person cannot achieve justice at the national level. In addition, the Committee may conduct visits to a State Party if there are reliable reports of grave or systematic violations in that country. Provided the Convention has entered into force, the Optional Protocol enters into force one month after 10 ratifications have been deposited.

# Convention in Plain Language

## *Introduction*

This information is a plain language version of the text of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The full text is available on:

**<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm>**

This information is based on and adapts the summary of a report of the Working Group that looked at a draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities prepared by the New Zealand government in 2004.

## PREAMBLE

- a. The founding documents of the UN say that we are all equal and we are all members of the human family which is important for freedom, fairness and peace in the world,
- b. We are all equal and all of us have human rights,
- c. We agree that people with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms and they must not be discriminated against,
- d. There are seven other international agreements that promote and protect human rights,
- e. We understand that disability is something that changes all the time and it is the environment and people's attitudes that create disability,
- f. It is important to keep in mind what the Standard Rules and the World Programme of Action are trying to achieve when trying to make laws, rules, decisions, programmes and practice better for people with disabilities,
- g. It is very important to make sure that the situation of people with disabilities is always equally taken into consideration when governments and international organizations make plans about a country's growth, for example, about how to get people out of poverty, or get them jobs,
- h. We understand that when someone discriminates against people with disabilities, he or she takes away their dignity and value as human beings,
- i. We also understand that there are many differences among people with disabilities and there are many types of disabilities,
- j. We also understand that all people with disabilities must have their rights, including people with disabilities who need extra support,
- k. We are worried that the rights of people with disabilities are still being taken away, even though there are agreements that protect their rights,
- l. We understand that it is important that countries work with one another to make life better for people with disabilities, especially in poor countries,
- m. We understand that people with disabilities help make countries better if they are fully included and their rights enjoyed,
- n. We understand that it is very important that people with disabilities are free to make their own decisions,
- o. We believe that people with disabilities should be included in the making of policies and programmes, especially those that are directly related to them,
- p. We are worried because people with disabilities are not only discriminated because of their disabilities, but also because of race, sex, or for many other reasons,

- q. We understand that many times, women and girls with disabilities are more often abused, beaten, injured or taken advantage of,
- r. We understand that children with disabilities have the same rights as all other children, and that the international agreement on children's rights also applies to them,
- s. It is very important to make sure that both women's situation and men's situation are taken into account in everything that the country does for human rights of people with disabilities,
- t. It is also very important to remember that most people with disabilities are poor, and it is necessary to find out what consequences that has for them,
- u. We keep in mind that we must have peace and security to make sure people with disabilities can have their rights, especially when they live in war zones or in countries that are not run by their own government,
- v. We understand how important it is for people with disabilities to be able to enjoy all areas of life, to have good health care, to go to school, to have the information they need, so that they can use their rights,
- w. We understand that each of us also has the duty to make sure everyone else enjoys his/her rights,
- x. We believe that the family is the main group in a society and that people with disabilities and their families should get the protection and help they need to be able to work for their human rights,
- y. We believe that an Agreement that covers all areas of life will be very helpful in making lives of people with disabilities better and in making sure that people with disabilities are treated equally and equally included in all areas of life, and in poor and richer countries.

Because of all the things listed, countries that decide to be part of the Agreement agree:

## ARTICLE 1

### Purpose

The reason why this Agreement is made is to make sure that the countries that agree to this Agreement (called "countries" in this document) will make sure that:

- All human rights and freedoms of all people with disabilities are enjoyed, promoted and protected;
- The dignity of people with disabilities is respected.

People with disabilities include those who have long-term impairments, for example, physical, psycho-social, intellectual and who cannot get involved in society because of different reasons, such as attitudes, language, stairs, and laws, which prevent people with disabilities from being included in society.

## ARTICLE 2

### Definitions

Communication – Means all ways of communicating, so that all people can communicate. For example, spoken language, sign language, text, Braille, touch, large print, written, audio, plain language, human reader and other ways that people with disabilities communicate.

“Language” – means all kinds of languages, spoken, signed, and other types of language that is not spoken.

“Discrimination on the basis of disability” – when people are excluded, shut out or prevented from doing things because of their disability. This can be in all areas of life.

“Reasonable Accommodation” – means that a person may need to have changes made, for example, to their home, or where they work, so they are able to enjoy their rights. If this is too expensive or too difficult then the changes may not be able to be made.

“Universal Design” – means that things are made, programmes created and places adapted so that they can be used by all people. Sometimes someone with a particular type of disability may need something specially made so they can enjoy their rights.

## ARTICLE 3

### General Principles

This Agreement is about:

- Dignity
- Ability to choose
- Independence
- Non-discrimination
- Participation
- Full inclusion
- Respect for difference
- Acceptance of disability as part of everyday life
- Equality of opportunity
- Accessibility
- Equality of men and women
- Respect for children.

## ARTICLE 4

### General Obligations

1. The countries promise to make sure that all human rights apply to all people, without discrimination because of disability. To fulfill this promise, they will:
  - a. Do what it takes to make sure that the rights from this Agreement are put into laws, policies, and practice in their country;
  - b. Take action: for example, adopt new laws and rules, change old rules and laws where necessary, and get rid of other laws and stop actions that discriminate against people with disabilities;
  - c. Make sure that the human rights of people with disabilities are included in all policies and programmes;
  - d. Not do things that do not support the Agreement, and make sure others respect the Agreement;
  - e. Take action to stop individuals, organizations or businesses from discriminating because of a person's disability;
  - f. Work on and encourage the use of goods, services, equipment and facilities that can be used by all people with disabilities all over the world, at the smallest possible cost to the person;
  - g. Work on and encourage new technologies in all aspects of life that are useful for people with disabilities, especially those that are low cost;
  - h. Provide information about all types of assistance, including technologies, and other forms of assistance, in a way that can be understood by people with disabilities;
  - i. Promote trainings about the rights in this Agreement for those who work with people with disabilities to make sure they can work better with people with disabilities.
2. For economic, social and cultural rights, the countries will put into practice the laws and rules that relate to these rights as much as they can with resources they have. If need be, they can cooperate with other countries to put into practice these rights. All other rights must be put into practice right away.
3. When making laws and rules about this Agreement, the countries will talk to and involve people with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through the organizations that represent them.
4. This Agreement will not affect any laws or rules that are better for the rights of people with disabilities. Countries must not use the Agreement as an excuse to not put into practice human rights that already exist.
5. The Agreement will apply to the country as a whole.

## ARTICLE 5

### Equality and Non-Discrimination

1. The countries agree that all people with disabilities are equal before the law and protected by the law without any discrimination.
2. The countries agree that discrimination because of a disability will not be allowed and that people will be protected if there is such discrimination.
3. The countries will take action to make sure that if a person with a disability needs changes made to his/her environment to enjoy his/her rights, then those changes will be made.
4. Special actions, or actions that are needed for people with disabilities to become equal to others, are allowed. This type of special treatment is not discriminatory to people without disabilities.

## ARTICLE 6

### Women with Disabilities

The countries agree that:

1. Women and girls with disabilities face all types of discrimination. Countries will make sure girls and women enjoy full and equal human rights and freedoms.
2. They will take action to support the growth and empowerment of women and guarantee that women with disabilities enjoy their rights.

## ARTICLE 7

### Children with Disabilities

The countries will:

1. Make sure that children with disabilities have the same rights as other children.
2. Make sure that what is best for the child is a priority whenever they do anything that concerns children.
3. Make sure that children with disabilities have the right to tell their opinion and that their opinion is taken into account. Make sure that children with disabilities get the help they need to tell their opinions.

## ARTICLE 8

### Awareness-Raising

1. The countries agree that, without delay, they will:
  - a. Help families and all people in society be more aware of the issues facing people with disabilities. They will work to make sure that rights and dignity of people with disabilities are respected;
  - b. Fight against stereotypes and prejudices about people with disabilities;  
*Stereotypes are general and incorrect beliefs that some people have about people with disabilities. These beliefs are often damaging which leads to discrimination against people with disabilities.*
  - c. Help people in society be aware of the capabilities of people with disabilities and how they can help the country grow.
2. The countries will also:
  - a. Make public campaigns about the rights of people with disabilities that:
    - i. Show that people with disabilities have the same rights as all people;
    - ii. Highlight disability in the community and change misunderstandings about disability;
    - iii. Show how people with disabilities help improve the workplace.
  - b. Make sure that schools and other places of learning teach respect for the rights of people with disabilities;
  - c. Encourage media (i.e. radio, television, newspapers and magazines) to show images of people with disabilities that promote the rights of people with disabilities;
  - d. Promote training programmes that will help people be aware of rights of people with disabilities.

## ARTICLE 9

### Accessibility

1. The countries will eliminate barriers that people with disabilities face in buildings, the outdoors, transport, information, communication and services, in both cities and the countryside. This way people with disabilities can live independently and fully live their lives. They will make rules and put them into practice for:
  - a. Buildings, roads, transportation, indoor and outdoor objects, for example, schools, housing, hospitals, health centers, and workplaces;
  - b. Information, communications, and other things, for example, electronic services and emergency services.

2. The countries will also take action to:
  - a. Make, put in place, and oversee minimum standards for accessibility for places and services that are open to public;
  - b. Make sure that private businesses and organizations that are open to the public are accessible for people with disabilities;
  - c. Train people who are involved in accessibility issues on what people with disabilities need when it comes to accessibility;
  - d. Have Braille signs and easy to read and understand information in buildings open to the public;
  - e. Provide help, such as readers, sign language interpreters and guides, so people with disabilities can access buildings open to the public;
  - f. Provide other types of help as needed so people with disabilities can get access to information;
  - g. Promote access to new technologies for people with disabilities;
  - h. When looking for, and creating new technology, make sure that accessibility is taken into account early on, so that this technology can be made accessible at the smallest cost.

## ARTICLE 10

### Right to Life

The countries agree that all people with disabilities have the right to life and will take action to make sure people with disabilities can use this right.

## ARTICLE 11

### Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies

The countries agree that they will respect all other agreements they have entered into about war or human rights.

The countries will take action to make sure that in the case of war, natural catastrophes or other emergencies, people with disabilities are protected.

## ARTICLE 12

### Equal Recognition as a Person before the Law

The countries:

1. Agree that people with disabilities have the right to be recognized as people before the law.
2. Agree that people with disabilities are capable like all other people on legal issues in all areas of their lives.
3. Will take action to make sure that people with disabilities can get and use support if they need it to work on legal issues.
4. Agree that where people with disabilities need support on legal or financial issues:
  - They will be protected from abuse;
  - Their rights and their choices will be respected;
  - People who give support will not pressure people with disabilities into making a decision;
  - They get the help they need, only for the time they need it and only as much as they need;
  - The courts will review the support received.
5. Agree and will make sure that people with disabilities:
  - Have the right to own or get property;
  - Have the right to control their money or other financial affairs;
  - Have the same opportunities as other people to get bank loans, mortgages and credit;
  - Cannot have property taken away without a reason.

## ARTICLE 13

### Access to Justice

1. The countries will make sure that people with disabilities can access the justice system in their countries just like all other people.

They will make sure that any rules which say how things should be done are adapted so that people with disabilities can be productively involved in all stages of legal processes, for example, being a witness.
2. The countries will provide training for people working in the justice system, such as police and prison staff.

## ARTICLE 14

### Liberty and Security

1. The countries will:
  - a. Make sure that people with disabilities have the same right to liberty and security as all other people;
  - b. Make sure that people with disabilities do not have this right taken away from them without a reason, because they have a disability, or in a way that is against the law.
2. The countries will make sure that if a person has had his/her liberty taken from them, he/she will be protected by law. They will also make sure that changes are made to the individual's environment if they are needed for that person to enjoy his or her human rights.

## ARTICLE 15

### Freedom from Torture or Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

1. Nobody will be tortured, or be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. Nobody will be forced to take part in medical or scientific experiments.
2. The countries agree to pass laws, and take other action to make sure that people with disabilities are protected from torture just like all other people.

## ARTICLE 16

### Freedom from Exploitation, Violence and Abuse

The countries will:

1. Pass laws, and take other action to make sure people with disabilities are not exploited or abused, both inside and outside their home.
2. Take action to prevent exploitation of people with disabilities by giving help and appropriate information to make sure people with disabilities and their families are protected from abuse.
3. Make sure that institutions and programmes serving people with disabilities are regularly looked at to make sure there is no violence or abuse.
4. Support people with disabilities with their recovery and reintegration into society if they have been victims of violence and abuse.

5. Create laws and policies to investigate and punish people who abuse or mistreat people with disabilities. These laws and policies will make sure that the needs of women and children are included.

## ARTICLE 17

### Protecting Integrity

People with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to be respected for their physical and mental whole.

## ARTICLE 18

### Freedom of Movement and Nationality

1. The countries agree that people with disabilities have the same rights as others to move around in their country or between countries, to choose where they live and to have a nationality like all other people. They will make sure that people with disabilities:
  - a. Have the right to get and to change their nationality and that nobody can take away their nationality without a reason or because of a disability;
  - b. Cannot have their passports or other identification of nationality taken away without a reason, or because of a disability, and that they are allowed to try to move to another country;
  - c. Are free to leave their own country and any other country;
  - d. Cannot be stopped from entering their own country without a reason or because of a disability.
2. Children with disabilities will be registered immediately after they are born. They will have the right to a name, to a nationality and, as much as possible, the right to know their parents, and be raised by their own parents.

## ARTICLE 19

### Living Independently and Being Included in the Community

The countries agree that all people with disabilities have the same right as anyone else to live in the community and to be fully included and participating in the community. This includes making sure that people with disabilities:

- a. Have the same opportunities as other people to choose who they live with, where they live, and are not forced to live in institutions or in other living arrangements that they do not like;
- b. Have a range of choices on where and how to live in the community, including personal assistance, to help with inclusion and living in the community and preventing people with disabilities from being isolated;
- c. People with disabilities can use community services that are available to the public, which may need to be adapted to a particular person's needs.

## ARTICLE 20

### Personal Mobility

The countries will make sure that people with disabilities can move around with the greatest possible independence, including:

- a. Assisting people to move around in the way they choose and at a cost that they can afford;
- b. Assisting people with disabilities to access mobility aids and technology, including making sure they do not cost a lot;
- c. Providing training in mobility skills for people with disabilities and staff working with them;
- d. Encouraging those that produce mobility aids and technology to take into account all aspects of movement.

## ARTICLE 21

### Freedom of Expression and Opinion and Access to Information

The countries will make sure that people with disabilities have the right to say what they think through Braille, sign language or other types of communication that they choose.

The countries will make sure people with disabilities have the same right as other people to give and receive information, including:

- a. Providing information intended for the general public to people with disabilities in formats that are adequate for them without extra cost (for example, Braille);
- b. Accepting the use of different ways people with disabilities communicate in official situations;

- c. Encouraging private businesses and organizations that serve the public to make their services more accessible for people with disabilities;
- d. Encouraging the media to make their information accessible to people with disabilities;
- e. Agreeing to, and promoting the use of sign language.

## ARTICLE 22

### Respect for Privacy

The countries will:

1. Make sure that nobody gets involved in the private life of people with disabilities without a reason, or in a way that is against the law. They will make sure that nobody illegally attacks the honour and reputation of people with disabilities. People with disabilities have the right to be protected by the law from such attacks.
2. Protect the confidentiality of personal, health and rehabilitation information of people with disabilities, in the same way that other people's information is protected.

## ARTICLE 23

### Respect for Home and the Family

1. The countries will take action to stop discrimination against people with disabilities when it comes to marriage and family relations, to make sure that:
  - a. People with disabilities have the same right as other people to marry and have a family;
  - b. People with disabilities have the same rights as other people to have children, to decide how many children to have, and when to have them. They should get information and be educated on reproduction and family planning; and they should get help to understand this information;
  - c. People with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to keep their fertility.
2. The countries will make sure that people with disabilities have the rights and responsibilities related to guardianship and adoption of children, with the most important issue being the child(ren)'s interest. They will give support to people with disabilities in accomplishing responsibilities related to raising their children.

3. The countries will make sure children with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else to a family life. From an early stage the countries will provide the information, services and support to children with disabilities and their families.
4. The child must not be taken away from his/her parents against his/her will, unless it is in the best interests of the child and is done legally. The child cannot be separated from parents because of the parent's or the child's disability.
5. Where close family (for example parents, brother or sister) cannot care for a child with a disability, they will look first at the wider family, and then the local community to provide care for the child.

## ARTICLE 24

### Education

1. The countries agree that all people with disabilities have the right to education. They will make sure that the education system, at all levels, includes people with disabilities, and that the educational system:
  - a. Works to make sure everyone develops their human potential, sense of dignity and self worth, and respect for human rights, freedoms and diversity;
  - b. Works to develop the person's personality and talents to their fullest potential;
  - c. Works to make sure all people with disabilities can be involved in society.
2. To do this, the countries will make sure that:
  - a. People with disabilities are not excluded from education because of their disability, and children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary and secondary education because of their disability;
  - b. All people with disabilities can choose education that includes them, is accessible and is in their own community;
  - c. Reasonable changes are made to make sure that people with disabilities get the most out of their education;
  - d. People with disabilities get the help they need to get the most out of their education;
  - e. The help for students with disabilities is given so that their individual needs are met.

3. The countries will make it possible for people with disabilities to learn social and life skills that they need to go to schools and be in the community. They will do this by:
  - a. Arranging that students with disabilities learn Braille or other types of communication, and that they get peer support and mentoring;
  - b. Teaching sign language;
  - c. Making sure that especially children who are blind, deaf or deafblind are educated in the most appropriate types of communication so that they get the most out of their education.
4. To help make sure that these rights are put into practice, the countries will hire teachers who are people with disabilities, teachers who are qualified in Braille and sign languages, and will train teachers and staff at all levels of education on how to give quality education to people with disabilities.
5. Countries will make sure that people with disabilities have equal access to vocational training, study in universities and lifelong learning like all other people, and will make any changes needed to make that happen.

## ARTICLE 25

### Health

The countries recognise that all people with disabilities have the same right to quality health care, without discrimination because of disability.

The countries will make sure that health and health-related rehabilitation services are available, including:

- a. Making sure that people with disabilities get the same variety, quality and standard of free and affordable health care as other people;
- b. Making sure that people with disabilities can get services they need because of their disability and to protect them from further disability;
- c. Having health services in peoples' own communities;
- d. Insisting that health workers give the same quality care to people with disabilities as to others, for example, *only* if the person agrees and has been told about their rights—achieved through trainings and by making ethical standards for health care;
- e. Stopping discrimination against people with disabilities when it comes to health insurance and life insurance, and making sure that such insurance is provided fairly;
- f. Making sure that people with disabilities will not be discriminated against and denied health care or health services or food and fluids because of their disability.

## ARTICLE 26

### Habilitation and Rehabilitation

1. The countries will take action, for example by promoting peer support, to make it possible for people with disabilities to enjoy maximum independence, full abilities and that they can be fully involved in all aspects of life. To make sure this happens, the countries will make available services that cover all areas of life, both in habilitation and rehabilitation, so that they:
  - a. Begin as early as possible, and are made specifically with strengths and needs of a particular person in mind;
  - b. Help people with disabilities participate and be involved in the community;
  - c. Are voluntary and available as close as possible to their communities.
2. The countries will promote training programmes for staff working in habilitation and rehabilitation services.
3. The countries will promote the use of assistive devices and other types of aid as they relate to habilitation and rehabilitation.

## ARTICLE 27

### Work and Employment

1. The countries agree that people with disabilities have the same right to work as other people. This also means that they have the right to earn a living from work they choose in a work environment that is open and accessible to *all* people.

The countries will pass laws and take other action needed to:

- a. Stop discrimination because of disabilities in all situations relating to all kinds of employment. This relates, for example, to situations when people with disabilities are trying to get jobs, are hired, or promoted, or in making sure that the working conditions are safe and healthy;
- b. Protect the rights of people with disabilities to equal pay for equal work, equal opportunity, safe and healthy working conditions, and the ability to make complaints;
- c. Make sure that people with disabilities can organize and join labor unions and trade unions like everyone else;
- d. Make it possible for people with disabilities to get career counseling and vocational trainings;
- e. Promote employment, career advances, and help people with disabilities to find and keep employment;

- f. Promote self-employment, business opportunities, and start-up businesses;
  - g. Hire people with disabilities in the government;
  - h. Encourage and help employers to hire people with disabilities;
  - i. Make it easy for people with disabilities to be in the work place and work environment by making sure reasonable allowances are made for them;
  - j. Work to make sure that people with disabilities can gain work experience in the labour market;
  - k. Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation and programmes to support people with disabilities to return to work and keep their jobs.
2. The countries will make sure that people with disabilities are not held in slavery. They will protect people with disabilities from forced labor as all other people are protected.

## ARTICLE 28

### Adequate Standard of Living and Social Protection

1. The countries recognise the right of people with disabilities to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families. This includes adequate food, clothing, housing, and to always be improving their living conditions.
2. The countries also recognise the right of people with disabilities to social protection by the government, without discrimination because of their disability.  
The countries will protect this right, including by making sure that:
  - a. People with disabilities can get necessary services, equipment and help for disability related needs;
  - b. People with disabilities have access to social welfare assistance and programmes that help them get out of poverty. This especially applies to women and girls with disabilities and older people with disabilities;
  - c. People with disabilities and their families who live in poverty get help from the government to be able to pay for expenses related to their disability;
  - d. People with disabilities have access to government housing programmes;
  - e. People with disabilities can get pensions.

## ARTICLE 29

### Participation in Political and Public Life

The countries recognise the political rights of people with disabilities without discrimination, and will:

- a. Make sure that people with disabilities can be fully involved in political and public life, for example by having the right to vote and be elected. To do this they should make sure:
  - i. That voting is easy to understand and accessible;
  - ii. To protect the right of citizens to vote in secret and to be elected;
  - iii. That citizens with disabilities who want assistance can get help to vote from someone of their choice.
- b. Encourage people with disabilities to be involved in the work of the government and to participate in public affairs, including:
  - i. Being involved in non-governmental organizations and associations focused on the activities of political parties and civil society;
  - ii. Forming and joining organizations of people with disabilities to represent people with disabilities, nationally, regionally and locally.

## ARTICLE 30

### Participation in Cultural Life, Recreation, Leisure and Sport

1. The countries recognise the right of people with disabilities to take part in cultural life. They will take action to make sure that:
  - a. People with disabilities have access to literature and other writings in formats such as Braille, sign and audio;
  - b. People with disabilities can get television programmes, film, theatre and other cultural activities in a way that they will understand, for example, with captioning and sign language;
  - c. People with disabilities can get to cultural performances and services such as libraries, museums, theatres and sites of national importance.
2. The countries will take action to make it possible for people with disabilities to develop and use their creative, artistic and intellectual potential.
3. The countries will take action to make sure that laws that protect documents and other writings and inventions from forgery or copying do not discriminate against people with disabilities.
4. People with disabilities have the right, just like everyone else, to have their culture and language recognized, for example sign languages and deaf culture.

5. The countries also recognise that people with disabilities have the same right as others to take part in recreation, leisure and sports. The countries will take action to:
  - a. Encourage and promote involvement of people with disabilities in sports with people without disabilities at all levels;
  - b. Make sure that people with disabilities have a chance to organize and participate in sport activities, and to receive the same training and support as other people;
  - c. Make sure that people with disabilities can get to sports and recreation arenas as other people can;
  - d. Make sure that children with disabilities can participate in play and sports at school, like other children;
  - e. Make sure that person with disabilities can get services to help organize recreational and sporting activities.

## ARTICLE 31

### Statistics and Data Collection

1. The countries will collect and look at statistics and other information to put into practice this Agreement.

In collecting this information they will:

  - a. Respect the right to people's privacy. The information should be given only if people agree;
  - b. Respect human rights and ethics when collecting and using the statistics.
2. The information collected will be in categories so that the countries can better understand how to put into practice the Agreement, and to learn more about barriers that exist for people with disabilities.
3. The countries are responsible for distributing this information and making sure that it is in a format like Braille or easy-to-read, for example, so that people with disabilities can access it.

## ARTICLE 32

### International Cooperation

1. The countries agree that it is important that they work together to make sure that each of them can put this Agreement into practice. They will take action to work together, especially with organizations of people with disabilities, to:

- a. Make sure that people with disabilities are included and can access international programmes for development;
  - b. Make sure that they work together to educate people by sharing information, experiences, training programmes and best practices;
  - c. Arrange cooperation in areas of science and technology;
  - d. Give technical and economic help, for example by sharing new technologies.
2. The governments are not allowed to say that because they do not have help from other countries, they cannot put the Agreement into practice.

## ARTICLE 33

### National Implementation and Monitoring

1. The countries will make sure that there is at least one position in the government that will be responsible for making sure that the Agreement is put into practice.
2. The countries will make sure that within the government, they create an independent institution that will monitor how the Agreement is being put into practice.
3. Non-governmental organizations, especially people with disabilities and their organizations, will be fully involved in overseeing how the country puts the Agreement into practice.

## ARTICLE 34

### Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities

1. The Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities will be created.
2. When the Agreement becomes law, the Committee will have 12 experts. After 60 more countries agree to the Agreement, six experts will be added with a maximum of 18 members.
3. Members of the Committee will serve as individuals. They will be highly ethical and will be experts or have experience with disability.
4. The countries will elect the members of the Committee and will make sure that they are from all over the world, that they have members who are men, women, people with disabilities, and come from different legal systems.
5. When countries meet for a Conference, they will elect the members of the Committee in secret. To be elected, a person must receive the largest number of votes. Also, more than half of people present at the Conference must vote for him/her.

6. The first election will happen within the first six months after the Agreement becomes law. After that, four months before every election, the UN Secretary General will send a letter to the countries and ask them to nominate people for the Committee. Countries will have two months to do so.
7. Members of the Committee will serve for four years. They can be re-elected once. After the first election, six members of the Committee will serve for only two years.
8. When time comes for the additional six members to be added to the Committee, they will be elected during regular elections.
9. If a member of the Committee dies or leaves, the country that nominated that member will get to nominate another expert to serve for the rest of the term.
10. The Committee will make its own rules of how it will work.
11. The UN Secretary General will give staff and office space to make sure that the Committee can work effectively.
12. The members of the Committee will get paid for their services and the UN General Assembly will decide how much.
13. The members of the Committee will have the same rights as the other experts of the UN.

## ARTICLE 35

### Reports by States Parties

1. Each country will write a report for the Committee within two years after the Agreement becomes law. The countries will report on how they are putting the Agreement into practice.
2. After that, each country will report to the Committee at least every four years.
3. The Committee will say what should be in the report.
4. After the country writes the first report, it does not have to repeat the same information in later reports. It is recommended that countries write their reports openly and consult with people with disabilities and their organizations.
5. The countries can write in the report what difficulties they had in putting the Agreement into practice.

## ARTICLE 36

### Consideration of Reports

1. When a Committee receives the report it will:
  - Review and make comments and recommendations;
  - Give the comments and recommendations to the country that reported;

- The country may then give more information to the Committee;
  - Ask for more information if needed.
2. If a country is very late with its report, the Committee will:
    - Tell the country that it is late;
    - If after three months, the country still does not report, the Committee will let the country know that it needs to visit the country to examine how it is putting into practice the Agreement.
  3. All countries will get each country's report from the UN Secretary General.
  4. The countries will share the report publicly in their countries and will allow comments and suggestions on the report.
  5. If needed, the Committee will send the country's report to other agencies within the UN, so that they can help the country with technical issues.

## ARTICLE 37

### Cooperation between States Parties and the Committee

1. Each country will work together with the Committee and help them do their job.
2. When working with the countries, the Committee will also try to find ways to make sure the countries are better equipped to put the Agreement into practice.

## ARTICLE 38

### Relationship of the Committee with other bodies

To make sure that the Agreement is put into practice and to encourage countries to work together:

- a. Agencies can be included in the meetings of the Committee when the Committee is talking about issues that the agency works on.

The Committee can invite these agencies to the meetings when their expertise is required.

The Committee can also ask these agencies to give their own reports on how countries are putting the Agreement into practice.

- b. There are seven other committees that look at how countries are putting into practice other human rights agreements, for example, agreements on women, children, etc. The Committee will talk to these other committees to make sure that they are not repeating their work, and to make sure that they are consistent when giving advice to countries on how to best put the Agreement into practice.

## ARTICLE 39

### Report of the Committee

The Committee will report to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council every two years. It will make suggestions and recommendations based on the reports they receive.

## ARTICLE 40

### Conference of States Parties

1. The countries will meet regularly to talk about issues relating to putting the Agreement into practice.
2. Within six months after the Agreement becomes law, the UN Secretary General will organize the first meeting. After that, the meetings will happen every two years or as the countries decide.

## ARTICLE 41

### Depositary

The Agreement will be filed with the UN Secretary General.

## ARTICLE 42

### Signature

The Agreement will be open for signing by all countries at the main UN building in New York as of March 30, 2007.

## ARTICLE 43

### Consent to be bound

The countries that sign the Agreement right away will have to “ratify” it, that is, their national government will have to accept the responsibility to put the Agreement into practice.

If the country does not sign the Agreement right away, they will be able to “accede” to the Agreement, meaning that they can join later.

## ARTICLE 44

### Regional integration organizations

1. “Regional integration organization” is an organization made up of a number of countries in the same region that have given that organization the power to deal with issues that are covered in the Agreement.
2. When the Agreement says “countries” it also applies to these organizations.
3. When counting how many countries have signed the Agreement, these organizations do not count.
4. These organizations can vote during the meetings, and will have as many votes as there are countries in the organization. If any of the countries in the organization votes on its own, the organization cannot vote.

## ARTICLE 45

### Entry into force

1. The Agreement will become law on the 30<sup>th</sup> day after 20 countries ratify or accede to the Agreement.
2. After that, when countries accept the Agreement, it will become law for them 30 days after the acceptance.

## ARTICLE 46

### Reservations

1. The countries can make reservations, meaning that they can say when they are signing the Agreement that they will not put into practice a particular obligation.  
But, these reservations cannot be against the goal and intent of this Agreement.
2. The reservations can be taken away at any time.

## ARTICLE 47

### Amendments

1. Any country can propose changes to the Agreement with the UN Secretary General.  
The Secretary General will then send the proposed changes to other countries.

If, within four months, at least one third of all countries want to meet to adopt the changes, Secretary General will organize the meeting.

The changes will be adopted if two-thirds of countries that are present at the meeting vote for them. Then the Secretary General will present it to the UN General Assembly for acceptance.

2. When a change is approved by the General Assembly, it will become law 30 days after two-thirds of all countries accept it.

After that, whenever a country accepts the change it will become law for them 30 days after they accept it.

The changes will be law *only* for those countries that accept it.

3. If the proposed change is about the reporting or the Committee, then 30 days after it is accepted by two-thirds of all countries, it will become law for *all* countries, not only those who accept the change.

## ARTICLE 48

### Denunciation

A country can later go back and say that they will not agree to the Agreement anymore. To do this, they must write it down and send it to the UN Secretary General. That becomes effective one year after that.

## ARTICLE 49

### Accessible Format

The text of the Agreement will be prepared in Braille and other forms, so that all people can read it and understand it.

## ARTICLE 50

### Authentic texts

The Agreement will be equally original in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

# Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

(to be adopted at the same time as the Agreement)

All countries that agree to this Protocol agree to:

## ARTICLE 1

1. Give the power to the Committee to receive and review complaints from individuals or organizations about violations of rights in the Agreement.
2. The Committee will only deal with complaints from countries that agree to this Protocol.

## ARTICLE 2

The Committee will NOT accept the complaints if:

- a. They do not say who they are from;
- b. They do not match the Agreement;
- c. The same situation has already been investigated. The same situation is being investigated by another body;
- d. The people complaining did not use their domestic system to the fullest extent. But, the complaint will be reviewed if the domestic system takes too long;
- e. The complaint is without basis; there is no proof;
- f. The complaint is about something that happened before the Protocol became law.

## ARTICLE 3

If the complaint is accepted, the Committee will secretly send it to the country in question. The country will respond within six months, and will say what solution they found.

## ARTICLE 4

1. When the Committee gets a complaint, it can ask the country to take action right away if there is a risk that the victim(s) will be hurt permanently.
2. If the Committee decides to ask the country to take action right away, this does not mean that the case is successful.

## ARTICLE 5

The Committee will meet in secret when examining complaints. After examining the complaint the Committee may, if needed, give suggestions and recommendations to the country in question and to the person(s) complaining.

## ARTICLE 6

1. If the Committee gets trustworthy information about serious or widespread violations of rights in the Agreement, it may invite the country in question to participate in the reviewing of the information and to give its opinion on it.
2. After reviewing all the information that it has, the Committee may select one or more of its members to urgently investigate the matter. If the country in question agrees, and if it is needed, it may make a visit to the country to investigate directly.
3. The Committee will give the country in question the results of the investigation and any recommendations it has.
4. The country in question will give its opinion on the results to the Committee within six months.
5. The investigation will be confidential and the country in question will be asked to cooperate throughout the process.

## ARTICLE 7

1. The Committee can ask the country in question to include in its report what it did in response to the investigation.
2. If it is needed, the Committee can ask the country in question to give its opinion on the results of the investigation if it has not answered within six months.

## ARTICLE 8

Each country that agrees to this Protocol is allowed to say that it does not give the power to the Committee for situations discussed in Articles 6 and 7.

## ARTICLE 9

The Protocol will be filed with the UN Secretary General.

## ARTICLE 10

This Protocol will be open for signing at the UN Headquarters in New York as of 30 March 2007.

## ARTICLE 11

The countries that agree to put the Agreement into practice can sign this Protocol and must then ratify it in their home countries.

## ARTICLE 12

1. “Regional integration organization” is an organization of several countries that have given it (the organization) the power to deal with issues that are covered in the Protocol.
2. When this Protocol says “countries that agree to this Protocol,” it applies also to these organizations.
3. When counting how many countries have signed the Protocol, these organizations do not count.
4. These organizations can vote during the meetings, and will have as many votes as there are countries in the organization. If any of the countries in the organization votes on its own, the organization cannot vote.

## ARTICLE 13

1. After the Agreement becomes law, this Protocol will become law on the 30<sup>th</sup> day after 10 countries ratify or accede to the Protocol.
2. After that, when countries accept the Protocol, it will become law for them 30 days after the acceptance.

## ARTICLE 14

The countries that agree to this Protocol can make reservations. But, these reservations cannot be against the goal and the intent of the Protocol.

The reservations can be taken away at any time.

## ARTICLE 15

1. Any country that agrees to this Protocol can suggest a change to the Protocol with the UN Secretary General.

The Secretary General will then send the proposed changes to other countries that agreed to this Protocol.

If, within four months, at least one third of all countries that agreed to this Protocol want to meet to adopt the changes, Secretary General will organize the meeting. At the meeting, the changes will be adopted if two-thirds of countries that are present vote for them.

Then the Secretary General will present them to the General Assembly for acceptance.

2. When the changes are approved by the General Assembly, they will become law 30 days after two-thirds of all countries that agree to this Protocol accept it. After that, whenever a country accepts the changes, they will become law for them 30 days after they accept it. The changes will be law *only* for those countries that accept them.

## ARTICLE 16

A country can later go back and say that they will not agree to the Protocol anymore. To do this, they must write it down and send it to the UN Secretary General and it will become effective one year after that.

## ARTICLE 17

The text of the Protocol will be prepared in Braille and other forms, so that all people can read it and understand it.

## ARTICLE 18

The Protocol will be equally original in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

The Convention is an international agreement that articulates the rights of persons with disabilities. Specifically, countries that become parties to it agree to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

## Why is it needed?

Disability is generally not considered a human rights issue, which means that often persons with disabilities do not enjoy access to their human rights on an equal basis with others. This Convention:

- Provides an immediate statement of international legal accountability regarding the human rights of persons with disabilities;
- Clarifies the content of human rights principles and their application in the context of persons with disabilities;
- Provides an authoritative and global reference point for domestic law and policy initiatives;
- Includes national and international mechanisms for more effective monitoring of the rights of persons with disabilities, including reporting on the Convention's implementation.

## What rights are included?

The Convention is comprehensive, comprising civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights.

**Civil and political rights** are rights that an individual has in his/her role as a member of society. For example, they include the right to vote, the right to participate in government decision-making, the right to a fair trial and the right to equal protection of the law.

**Cultural rights** are rights that protect a person's enjoyment of his/her own culture.

**Social rights** are rights relating to the person in society, such as the right to education and health.

**Economic rights** are rights relating to economic security and independence of a person, such as the right to work.

## **Who can sign?**

Any country.

“Regional integration organizations” (RIOs). A RIO is an organization that is made up of countries that have delegated certain powers to the organization, e.g. the European Union (EU).

The RIOs will also have to report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is established by the Convention, and will participate in the Conference of States Parties in matters in which they have competence. For example, the EU has competence over issues of non-discrimination, meaning that EU discrimination legislation prevails over national legislation and must be applied by EU member states.

## **Who can ratify?**

Each country that signs the Convention must ratify it in their national government, and each country has unique rules specifying who has the authority to ratify and how this is to be done on a national level.

## **How will it work?**

Countries that are party to the Convention are responsible for meeting the Convention obligations. This will require political will, meaning that the government officials must believe that it is in their country’s interest to comply with the Convention obligations.

## **Do parties to the Convention have to report?**

The Convention provides for a monitoring body made up of twelve experts. When there are 60 States Parties, the membership will increase to 18.

Parties to the Convention must submit a comprehensive report within two years of becoming members. Subsequent reports are due every four years.

The reports will serve as a way to track the progress that a particular country has made in the implementation of the Convention domestically.

## **How are the members of the monitoring body elected?**

Parties to the Convention nominate experts from their own nationals. Voting is done at a Conference of States Parties.

Civil society should work actively with their governments to ensure that experts are nominated from their country.

## Who are the members of the monitoring body?

The experts must:

- Serve in their personal capacity;
- Have a high moral standing;
- Have recognized competence and experience in the field covered by the Convention.

The body should also:

- Include experts with disabilities;
- Reflect equitable geographical distribution;
- Have representation of the different forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems;
- Have balanced gender representation.

## What is the Optional Protocol?

The Optional Protocol gives the monitoring body the power to take on individual complaints of violations of all rights in the Convention (i.e. civil, political, social, economic and cultural). States Parties to the Convention must separately sign and ratify the Optional Protocol before it becomes binding on them. Provided the Convention has become law, the Optional Protocol becomes law 30 days after 10 States Parties to the Convention have ratified it.

## What needs to be done now?

The Convention opens for signature on 30 March, 2007. It will come into force one month after 20 ratifications have been deposited.

All countries should participate in the signing ceremony and signatory states should ratify as soon as possible.

National human rights institutions and other bodies promoting human rights should be informed of the Convention and incorporate disability rights into their programming.

Civil society should actively promote and engage in the ratification campaign, and subsequent monitoring and implementation of the Convention.

## **What is the role of civil society in the Convention?**

Civil society's motto "Nothing About Us Without Us!" reflects the role that it has had in the Convention's development. People with disabilities and their organizations must be included in all aspects of policy-making.

This right to participate in all stages of implementation of the Convention is something that people with disabilities and civil society have fought for throughout the process of negotiating the Convention. It is our *right*, and it imposes on all of us a *responsibility* to participate.

# Ratification Advocacy Tools:

## *An Introduction*

This section is intended to provide you with tools you can use to develop and implement a campaign for ratification of the Convention in your country.

You can find following information in this section:

- 1. Act NOW!** describes the responsibility that you have as an advocate to be included in the process. It further outlines the steps necessary to ensure widespread support for the ratification among various constituencies, such as government representatives, allies outside the government and the community at large.
- 2. Campaign Planning Worksheet** helps you prepare a targeted and effective ratification advocacy campaign. It includes a number of questions that will help you develop SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) that will ensure that you achieve your ultimate goal of ratification of the Convention. It will also help you identify target groups and develop messages that will appeal to that particular group and ensure they support the ratification of the Convention.
- 3. How a Country Becomes a Party to the Convention** gives you an overview of the steps necessary for a country to become legally bound to the Convention.

The pocket includes a number of sample letters to help you in your advocacy outreach. For example, letters that you may use to motivate various constituencies (government, allies and community), requesting their support for the Convention ratification. You can use these samples in your advocacy activities and modify them as necessary for your particular country context. It also includes an at-a-glance ratification process for the United States. *Please note* that the ratification process will be different in your country.

# Act NOW!

## Participate!

The adoption of the Convention means it is time to ACT NOW. Ratification will only happen with your participation. You are responsible for having your voices heard, increasing visibility and improving accountability so that the Convention is ratified and disability rights are reflected in your country's laws, policies and practices. You must know, educate, mobilize and lobby.

## Know the Facts!

- Learn how the Convention becomes part of your national law.
- Know the effects of disability rights in your community and know the cost of not ratifying the Convention.
- Be prepared with concrete examples showing why the Convention is important for your community and country, for example:
  - Common abuses against persons with disabilities;
  - Barriers to education, employment, transportation, access to health and rehabilitation services, communication.

## Educate Others!

Identify **governmental officials** and **representatives** making decisions affecting the lives of persons with disabilities:

- Educate them on the issues through meetings, e-mails, letters, telephone calls and personal visits. Use fact sheets, information packets, pamphlets. Find sample letters in the pocket of *Section 2: Ratification Advocacy Tools*.
- Stress the importance of addressing disability as a human rights issue, similar to other traditionally marginalized groups, such as women or indigenous people.

Speak out in your **community** and share information:

- Talk at meetings, in schools and in the community on the importance of changing societal attitudes towards people with disabilities.
- Make sure everyone knows this is an issue you care about.
- Encourage a national debate: inform the media with media advisories, fact sheets, information packets, individual meetings with reporters, letters to editors, radio and TV appearances. See *Section 3: Media Tools* for more information.

## Mobilize Partners and Allies!

**Find** partners and allies who have a common interest in supporting disability rights. Look for allies across all types of disability, as well as organizations which are a part of broader human rights or social justice movements. For example, mainstream human rights organizations; specialized groups representing women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons, ethnic and racial minorities, sexual minorities, people living with HIV/AIDS, migrant workers; humanitarian organizations; and relief and development organizations.



Inform your allies about the importance of the issue; provide copies of the Convention in national languages and in plain language. These resources can be found in *Section 1: Convention Information*.



Create or join a national ratification campaign.



Encourage all your partners and allies to be involved; provide concrete ways they can become involved.

### Sample e-mail or fax message to your allies

We encourage all efforts in working with governments alerting them about the importance of ratifying this Convention.

Things you can do: write, e-mail, fax or call your parliamentarian or government representative; get in touch with national media sources in your country to inform them of the Convention; contact local and national NGOs; contact prominent people in your country to advocate for the Convention.

Sample lobby letters and information on your country's position and policies on the Convention can be found at [include reference for information].

**Build a network** through which your partners and allies can connect:



Create a communication system: build a website, create a list-serve, hold meetings at the local, provincial and national level.



Engage young people by spreading the message in colleges and universities.



Set up links with NGOs working on disability issues internationally to ensure that your voices are heard at that level.



Find ways to exchange information on a regular basis to ensure that you are speaking with one voice.

**Build coalitions** with international NGOs and campaigns:

- Create coalitions that are inclusive and representative of diverse disabilities. This builds support and legitimacy for your issue. It also raises the profile of your group and the Convention.
- Working with others gives you an opportunity to share the work, have access to more resources and learn from others' experiences. Exchange of ideas, written materials and programme concepts can help to diversify and energize local and national advocacy.

## **Lobby!**

**Strengthen your relationship with local and national government,** because government is responsible for deciding whether to ratify the Convention. Once ratified, they are obligated to make it part of the country's laws. Strong relationships with government officials make advocating for ratification of the Convention more effective. Strong relationships with government officials are also useful for work you do as you advocate for the implementation of obligations regarding persons with disabilities post-ratification.

- Write to your government, urge them to sign and ratify the Convention. Find sample letters in the pocket in this section.
- Discuss the Convention directly with your Members of Parliament.
- Meet with your contacts in various ministries, local and national-level governmental agencies.

## **Follow Up**

Advocacy is a process and requires continual follow up.

- Send a thank you letter to your government officials and representatives, partners, allies and community members. It is important to acknowledge the time that individuals and groups give to the issue.
- Assess the success of your tactics and messages; make changes where needed. Multiple attempts may be needed for your objectives to be achieved.

# Campaign Planning Worksheet

## 1. IDENTIFY YOUR RATIFICATION OBJECTIVES

Your overall goal is for your country to ratify the Convention by a specific date. To achieve this goal, identify SMART objectives that will contribute to your ratification goal. This will help you plan how to achieve your goal:

- Specific** – Is the objective detailed, well-defined, action oriented?
- Measurable** – Can you track progress, change and success? How?
- Achievable** – Can it be done in proposed timeframe with available resources?
- Relevant** – Is this relevant to your work and goal?
- Time-bound** – Is there a clear deadline?

### Your SMART Objectives:

*E.g. By June 2007, Parliamentarian X will introduce the ratification process to the Cabinet.*

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## 2. IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

You have several target audiences, including:

- Government representatives who are directly responsible for the ratification process;
- Allies in the government who can influence the ratification process;
- Allies who can be effective messengers for government representatives, those who the government representatives will trust and listen to;
- The community which can be engaged and put additional pressure on the government representatives.

**Who in your government is directly responsible for ratification?**

*E.g. Parliament, President/Prime Minister , Cabinet, a combination of the three*

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**Who in your government directly or indirectly influences the ratification process? Are they willing to facilitate the ratification process?**

*E.g. Disability focal point, legal officer in the Ministry of Social Development*

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**Who are the most effective allies to deliver your message to the decision makers? Who will the government representatives most trust/listen to?**

*E.g. National Human Rights Institutions, human rights organizations, a political leader, a sports personality, the First Lady or First Gentleman who may be willing to advocate for the issue*

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**Who in your community can you engage to effectively influence government representatives who are part of the ratification process (those you have listed above)?**

*E.g. Community groups, local associations*

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### 3. IDENTIFY YOUR MESSAGE

The message you choose will depend on your country context, your goal and your audience (government, allies outside of government, your community).

#### ■ Government Representatives

Messages to government representatives that focus on leadership, opportunity and partnership may be more appropriate than emphasizing a government's obligation. On the other hand, some government leaders may need to be challenged if they seem to deliberately be delaying action. Your messages may involve a combination of the two approaches. Only you and your colleagues can decide the message that is most appropriate and effective for your country situation.

#### What is your message for your government representatives?

E.g.: Ratifying the Convention ensures the momentum continues from the hard work and energy contributed to the negotiation process.

E.g.: Governments involved in the negotiation and adoption process of the Convention without ratifying will be viewed by other countries as hypocritical and weak.

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#### ■ Allies Outside of Government

Identify how the Convention affects the programmes, policies and practices of organizations and institutions and the communities with whom they work. Your message must demonstrate how and why the Convention is important for their work.

#### What messages will be effective for your allies outside of government?

E.g. Disability is a human rights issue and to have a truly inclusive society, all people need to have access to basic human rights.

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## ■ Your Community

Identify messages targeting both the hearts and minds of the community. Use short, simple phrases that capture the essence of the Convention's goals and which resonate naturally with most people. Make sure it is simple so that everyone can understand the main message.

Your messages will vary depending on your country's culture and political situation. Numbers are useful to communicate ideas. They can convey scientific information and move an audience emotionally.

### **What short and simple messages are most effective for the community?**

E.g.: "Equal participation for all"; "If we do not act, 650 million people will be denied their rights".

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## 4. IDENTIFY YOUR TACTICS

Think creatively! Different situations call for different tactics. There is almost always a need for multiple tactics. Often, different groups will take on different responsibilities, depending on their areas of expertise. Remember to engage the media when appropriate. See *Section 3: Media Tools* in this packet for additional information and materials.

### **What tactics will you need to achieve your objectives?**

E.g. Lobbying; focused media advocacy; protest; a combination of activities

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## 5. IDENTIFY OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED

You may need several types of materials, depending on your audience. Identify what kind of information each of your target audiences needs and the best way to deliver and communicate the information.

### What additional materials do you need to develop?

*E.g. A short summary of the Convention in your national language(s) that you can use with advocates, government officials and the media.*

*E.g. A short fact sheet on why ratification of the Convention is important in general or for your country.*

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## 6. EVALUATE YOUR PROGRESS

### Have you achieved your objectives? What worked, what did not work?

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### What needs to be changed for your objectives and goal to be achieved?

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# How a Country Becomes a Party to the Convention

When the negotiations on the Convention are completed and the final text is adopted by the UN General Assembly, it is time to make the Convention a reality on the ground. To ensure that the Convention will be implemented in each and every country, the following must happen:

## ■ **Convention is signed.**

This usually happens in the UN Headquarters in New York City. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities opens for signature on March 30, 2007. When a particular country signs the Convention, it signals its intention to become a party to the Convention in the future, but signing the Convention does *not* make that country party to the Convention. At that point, the country agrees that it will not do anything inconsistent with the purpose of the Convention. However, this does not mean that it must implement all the Convention obligations.

## ■ **Convention is ratified by the national government.**

After signing the Convention, each country's national government must ratify the Convention in order to become a State Party to the Convention, legally bound to implement the provisions of the Convention in their country. Ratifying the Convention means that the government agrees to make the Convention part of the country's national laws.

This process can happen relatively quickly, but sometimes it can take years for a country to ratify the Convention, and some never do. This is where your local and national level advocacy is extremely important in ensuring that the government acts in a speedy fashion to ratify the Convention.

We have included in this section's pocket an overview of the ratification process in the United States.

### **REMEMBER**

The process is not the same everywhere; in fact, it is as diverse as the countries we live in. The process of ratification is unique for each country, and knowing who is responsible, and how the process happens is essential if you want to be an effective advocate for ratification of the Convention. The *Campaign Planning Worksheet* in this section can help you start getting involved in this process.

## ■ **Convention becomes international law.**

One month after 20 countries have signed and ratified the Convention, it becomes valid international law for those countries. Countries that become parties to the Convention once it comes into force do so through the process of *accession*.

After the Convention becomes international law, the Optional Protocol to the Convention becomes law one month after 10 State Parties have signed and ratified it.

## ■ **Next steps: Implementation.**

Article 4 of the Convention provides a framework of what measures countries need to undertake to start implementing the Convention in their countries. Measures include changing laws that are inconsistent with the Convention, adopting new laws, and including persons with disabilities in decision-making processes. For the full text, see *Section 1: Convention Booklet*.

# Media Tools

## *An Introduction*

Reaching out to the general public is a challenge for any advocacy effort. Publicizing your message through different types of media (print, radio, TV, electronic) will help you reach a wider audience to create widespread support for the Convention.

In this section, you will find tools on how to make the best use of media in spreading the word about the Convention:

1. **Overview: Why We Need the Media** explains the importance of media advocacy for your efforts to have your country ratify the Convention.
2. **How to Get Media Coverage** offers tips and advice on how to make sure that the news media gets interested in your cause. It also provides information on how to develop a press kit, a very useful tool for familiarizing the media representatives with the ratification campaign.
3. **How to Prepare a Press Release** is a guide for effectively preparing a press release to make sure that it is picked up by the media.
4. **How to Organize a Press Conference** offers tips and advice on how to hold a successful press conference, which is one of the main ways to get the media interested in your cause.

In the pocket, you will find a Sample Press Release that you can modify for your own needs. Also included is a Guide to Portraying People with Disabilities in the Media, which you can distribute to the media to ensure that they speak and write about persons with disabilities accurately and with respect.

# Overview

## *Why We Need the Media*

Media campaigning will help you carry your message to a larger number of people than you can reach individually or through other means. The media is a forum to educate the public and policymakers on the Convention and its importance for the people in your country. Media campaigning can help gather support for ratification of the Convention in your country.

Media advocacy is useful when your goal is to encourage action or a change of policy of the government, such as to ensure that the government ratifies the Convention and incorporates it into your country's laws. Politicians care about their public image and media can be an effective way to persuade them to support the ratification process.

This method of advocacy is also used when the goal is to change the public's view on a particular issue. Since misperceptions about disability are widespread among the public, using the media to change these misperceptions is an effective way to reach a wider audience and educate them about the rights of persons with disabilities.

By making sure that the media is interested in and promotes the rights of persons with disabilities, you are helping change the way that disability is portrayed and talked about. This is key to changing the misperceptions that often are the cause of discrimination and segregation of people with disabilities.

# How to Get Media Coverage

## What is news?

One dictionary defines news as: “a matter interesting enough to the general public to warrant reporting.”

Interesting stories about events, actions or people are news. Journalists depend on good stories. Stories must contain new information and a fresh approach.

## How to make sure journalists pick up your story

There is no substitute for maintaining good media contacts. Your ability to get widespread media coverage will depend largely on your *personal contacts* with reporters, writers and other media representatives.

## PRESS LISTS

Press lists are essential. You should obtain any and all media directories. Keep contact information for assignment editors and reporters who cover your issue. When you read, see or listen to a media report that relates to your issue, note the reporter's or correspondent's name.

Regularly update the press lists, through frequent phone calls and maintaining regular contact with people in the press. This way, you will be informed as people change positions or leave the company.

## PITCHING STORIES TO REPORTERS







Reporters are *always* looking for new ideas for stories. They want to hear from you about new topics and best ways to cover the story. Your job is to make sure that the information you give them is relevant.

The telephone remains one of your most direct routes for communicating with journalists. The purpose of a pitch call is to propose a story idea, an interview or coverage of an event. You may find yourself leaving several voice mails, so you need to have a good opening line.

Remember that the journalist is a busy professional. Deadlines are constant. Do not waste their time.

Before you initiate or take a press call, prepare the appropriate background materials, the names of your spokespeople and other contacts, and the numbers where they can be reached at that moment. Have that information while talking to the reporters.

## PITCHING TIPS

-  **Target the right person.** You should already have established contacts with the media representatives. If not, make sure you continuously keep track of who is covering disability issues, human rights issues, legal issues, or anything that has to do with foreign policy or social policy, and make sure you establish personal contact with them.
-  **Don't overlook radio.** You should pitch representatives of your organization to local talk radio programmers, who often respond quickly to emerging local or national issues. When “booking” a radio talk show, contact the show's producers and researchers, in addition to the host doing the segment. Timing and the ability to pitch your story in terms of its local news angles are critical.
-  **Be succinct and persuasive.** Since journalists are busy, you have only a minute or less to state your purpose. If you are following up an advisory or press release, explain the essentials, including why they should cover it. Start by asking if they have a few minutes—if so and they are not on deadline, you can go into more detail.
-  **Offer story ideas gently.** Journalists *do not* like it when people tell them what to write.
-  **Make your calls in the morning.** This gives you a better chance of talking to reporters instead of their machines. It is also when most editors and producers decide what to cover in their evening news or next-day paper. Afternoons in newsrooms mean deadlines, when no one has time to talk.
-  **Follow up with written information.** Send another copy of your advisory or press release, if it is needed. Ask if you can provide other materials (fact sheets, speeches, etc.). Double-check fax numbers and e-mail addresses, and both fax and e-mail all written materials.

### REMEMBER

Journalists want stories, not *just* information.

## PRESS KITS

The purpose of the press kit is to make sure that the journalists get the basic information about the Convention. The ultimate goal is getting your campaign covered in print, on radio, or on TV.

### A press kit should:

- Be simple, factual, clear and easy to skim;
- Be bulleted, written in short paragraphs with lots of white space;
- Include background and data on those issues that will most likely peak an interest in covering the campaign — not every piece of information must be included;
- Create interest, not exhaust it;
- Use headlines, subheadings and boxes to guide the reader through your document;
- Have your major points in **boldface** or boxed to make them stand out;
- Keep everything short and simple;
- Have a clear layout to help present your narrative in a logical way.

### REMEMBER

Put your contact information on *every piece of paper you include in the kit.*

### Press kit should include separate sheets with following information:

- **Statement of purpose and background of your organization:** Its mission statement, history, size, sources of funding and other operational information.
- **Fact sheets:** One-page background and “factoid” sheets on various aspects of the issues. If you are working with local media, area-specific information, like statistics, are invaluable to the media. These should be only few in numbers, and where possible, statistical information should be in charts/graphs. Information in *Section 1* of this Handbook will help you create these.
- **Contact list:** Names of your key representatives and experts within and outside of the organization who can provide further information on the issue. Include full contact information, including office and fax numbers and e-mail addresses.
- **Additional resources:** A list of related books, articles and other published or taped material available from your organization or elsewhere. Be sure to list any relevant Web sites, or Internet mailing lists.
- **Press clippings:** Three or four favorable newspaper or magazine articles that feature or mention your group, or editorials or cartoons that present your issue as you see it. Often reporters copy each other and get ideas from past clips.

# How to Prepare a Press Release

**See Sample Press Release in this section.**

A press release must provide answers to **five** important questions:

- WHO?** The subject must be identified and described (it can be a person, group, event or activity).
- WHAT?** What is going on and what media needs to know.
- WHERE?** Place where the event or the press conference will be held (exact address of the location and, if possible, the map with instructions).
- WHEN?** When the event or the press conference will be held must be clearly stated, including: date, day in the week and the time when it will start.
- WHY?** Why this event is important must be clearly stated.

A press release must be:

- Short
- Concise
- Concrete
- Contain information that is new to the journalists and not merely your opinion on the topic
- Never longer than two pages.

Always send the press release addressing a specific person. If the media to whom you are sending the press release does not have specific journalist covering given issue(s), you can send the release to the editor in charge.

## REMEMBER

A press release should have sufficient information so the journalist can write a story from the release. Hopefully the journalist will want more information.

## CONTENT

The first part of the press release must contain the most important facts that you want to present. This is your chance to “lead” the journalist to write his or her text in the most suitable way for you.

The central part of the press release contains additional information and quotes that are arguments to the main story. While writing the press release, make sure that the information provided is current.

You should be guided by these questions:

- Am I providing new information?
- Is this information in accordance with the general principles of my organization and the message I would like to be conveyed?
- Is this information interesting and could it be presented in an interesting way?

Make sure you provide certain quotes of acknowledged experts in that field: “Based on the research by the ... (state the person or the organization), statistics are pointing out that there is ... (this and that number of...)”.

#### REMEMBER

By providing quotes, you are giving credibility to your message.

Be aware that in accordance with common journalistic procedure, journalists/ editors will edit your information to use in their own product, so each comment you make should be able to stand on its own.

## FORMAT

- Form and content are equally important.
- It is recommended to make short sentences and quotes to make the press release easy to read “at-a-glance”.
- Margins must be 20-30 millimeters to allow the journalist/editor to write comments.
- While writing the press release, try to use paper with the name of your organization in the headline or write the full address in the upper left corner. This will help journalists/editors identify your organization as a source of information.
- In the upper right hand corner include a contact name with telephone, mobile telephone number and e-mail.
- In the upper left corner, under the address, write the date when the release is to be published. This is very important information and you need to use **bold** letters to highlight it.
- Clearly state the time and date when your press release is available for publication.

- Put the most important information in the title to attract the attention of the reader. Start the text with the title written with large letters under the address.
- Start writing the press release at one third from the top of the page. The first sentence needs to contain the lead of the story.
- Answers to the first four questions (who, what, when, and where) should be in the first paragraph.
- Answers to the question “why” should be in the second paragraph and often support the lead. The “why” is often a quote.
- The release should be “tabbed” a bit and the text needs to be separated by the double line.

# How to Organize a Press Conference

Press conferences are useful when:

- The information you would like to share is “big news” and is best offered to all the press at the same time.
- You have a celebrity or visual story and your target media is television.

## REMEMBER

The press dislikes press conferences, so if the information you are presenting is complex it is best to request one-on-one briefings.

## HOW TO GET MEDIA TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE

- Send a “Media Alert: Request for Coverage” three days prior to the date of the press conference. The pre-press conference media alert invites press to cover the story and offers information about the press conference. It is NOT the full presentation of the press conference release.
- Call key journalists and editors to make sure they received your invitation. Pitch the story and press conference at that time.
- A day before the conference, double-check by phone if a journalist from a given media is going to come to your conference and who it will be. A decision to cover a press conference is made the day before or day of the event.

## WHEN TO HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE

- The best time of the day to organize a press conference is between 10:00 and 14:00.
- If your target is television media, the best time for a press conference is 11:00.
- There is no good day to schedule a press event. It is likely there will always be competitive breaking news. The press works a seven-day week.
- In a Monday–Friday work week, the press weekend is Friday and Saturday. Friday and Saturday are never good days for press conferences. For this reason organizations schedule their press conferences on Sunday. This is a good strategy if your target media is print, since the Monday paper is often looking for news. But, it is not a good strategy for television. There is less TV news on weekends and a smaller audience.

**REMEMBER**

Media hospitality. Provide refreshments, water, tea or coffee. If conference is during lunch (*not advised*), provide a light lunch.

## HOLDING THE PRESS CONFERENCE

- The press conference content should be presented in no longer than 20 - 30 minutes. This allows ample time for the journalists to ask questions. Once the question period is closed, some journalists may request a one-on-one interview with your spokesperson for a precise quote or soundbite.
- The full press release and, when relevant, the prepared text of remarks should be handed out at the press conference.
- Some groups distribute a press kit with background information. If you choose to have a press kit available for the journalists, make sure that the press release is the first thing journalists see in the packet.

**REMEMBER**

Make sure that there is one person from your organization who greets journalists as they arrive, introduces them to the topic, and hands them the materials.

### Speakers

- A press conference is not a panel discussion or forum. Everyone who speaks must make a meaningful contribution to the story (ideally you will have two or three speakers). Make sure that speakers are experts and are able to answer the questions. *Section 1* of this Handbook will help you get prepared.
- It is good to have a moderator who introduces speakers and directs questions. It is ideal if the moderator knows the press.

### Evaluation

If possible, talk to the journalists to see what was good and what was weak (*never* use the term: “wrong”) with the given conference and try to use their suggestions to improve your work in the future.

## DO'S AND DON'TS FOR PRESS CONFERENCE

### DO

- Double-check the room and the equipment: loudspeakers and microphone, presentations, computers, background surface for video/PowerPoint presentations, water for the speakers, table for information materials, etc.
- Type names and positions of all the speakers and put it in front of them so that journalists know who they are addressing.
- The moderator should welcome the audience and present the participants of the conference.
- The moderator, or in case that a specific speaker is asked a question, should ask journalists to introduce themselves and state the media they represent.
- Make sure that you limit individual journalist(s) to just one or two questions, so that others get a chance to ask questions as well.
- If journalists have additional questions, want an explanation or interview with some of the participants, the moderator should ask them to meet with the speakers after the conference.
- Speakers must be clear and speak in simple language.
- Make sure you adapt the tone of your voice so that people in the front and in the back can hear you, without overly raising your voice.
- Prepare enough participation forms for journalists; ask them to fill it in so you can know who was present. Ask them when the given report will be broadcasted and if you can get a copy.
- Collect all press releases and keep them in your archives as both a reminder of which media reported on your activities and as a reminder of what you said at that occasion.
- There is no “off the record” information while discussing with journalists. Anything you say journalists may use to add to their stories.
- If you do not like looking at cameras, look at the top of the lenses. This will seem like you are looking directly at the camera. This is only applicable if the camera is two meters or further from you.
- Make sure you dress properly — avoid bright colors or gimmicks.



Make sure that mobile phones of all speakers are turned off or on a silent mode.



Make available written copies of your press release and the general promotional materials on activities of your organization. These will be distributed to journalists and other participants.

## ■ DON'T

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Do not use abbreviations — not all people are familiar with the terminology you are using.



Do not speak too fast or too slow. Clear understanding is the ultimate goal that you are trying to achieve.



Do not play with your fingers. This makes it seem like you are nervous.



Do not lean back in your chair. This gives the message you are not interested in the topic or what the journalists have to say.

## TIPS FOR THE BEST POSSIBLE CONTACTS WITH THE MEDIA

- **Seek and present good stories to the press.** The relationship between you and the press is interdependent. They need news and you have good stories. However, if you waste their time with “non-stories”, they are less likely to see you as a news source.
- **Be honest.** Trust needs to be built with time. Good journalists are going to make sure to get as much information as possible. You can act responsibly towards those journalists, but are not obliged to provide all the information they are asking. Information that you do provide must be accurate.
- **There are differences amongst journalists too.** Journalists may have different skills and knowledge, and you will always have a better experience with a journalist who knows your topic. The reality is not all journalists are familiar with all topics. You need to make sure you educate them to a certain extent.
- **Never expect that a journalist will write an article the way you would write it.** Press articles are always going to contain different points of view, including those that you consider to be irrelevant or even damaging for you or your organization. But, you have the full right to expect that the information you provided will be transmitted accordingly.
- **Every journalist wants an interview with the top person in the hierarchy of your organization.** Very often it is appropriate for journalists to talk to the main responsible person in the hierarchy of the organization. It is also sometimes useful to talk to the public relations officer or another competent representative of your organization.
- **If an article contains incorrect information, you have the right to ask for the correction.** Mistakes are inevitable, but the reputable media are going to correct their mistakes if you point them out. Do not hold back — journalists do not hold back either.
- **In case of crisis, react appropriately.** If something goes wrong during the conference, it is your responsibility to make sure it is smoothly handled.

# Glossary

*(Words in capital letters are defined elsewhere in the glossary)*

- 1. ACCESSION** The act by which one country becomes party to a CONVENTION already in force between other countries.
- 2. ADOPTION** Formal acceptance of the text of a CONVENTION.
- 3. COVENANT** Binding agreement between countries; used synonymously with CONVENTION and TREATY. The major international human rights covenants, both passed in 1966, are the INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR) and the INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR).
- 4. CONVENTION** Binding agreement between countries; used synonymously with TREATY and COVENANT. Conventions are stronger than DECLARATIONS because they are legally binding for governments that have RATIFIED them. When a convention is ADOPTED, international norms and standards are created. At this point, countries can then SIGN and RATIFY the convention, promising to uphold it. The UN or other relevant body can then censure governments that violate the standards set forth in a convention.
- 5. CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES** International legally binding agreement with the purpose to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. The UN General Assembly adopted the final text of the Convention in December 2006, and it opens for signature on March 30, 2007.
- 6. DECLARATION** Document stating agreed-upon principles but which is not legally binding. UN conferences, like the 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, produce these. In addition, the UN General Assembly often issues influential but legally non-binding declarations.
- 7. ENTRY INTO FORCE** When a treaty has received the requisite number of ratifications by countries, the treaty will enter into force for those countries. This means it becomes legally binding upon those countries. The Disability Rights Convention will come into force one month after 20 ratifications have been deposited.

- 8. INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS** Organizations sponsored by several governments that seek to coordinate their collaboration; some are regional (e.g., the Council of Europe, the African Union), some are alliances (e.g., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and some are dedicated to a specific purpose (e.g., UNESCO).
- 9. INTERNATIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS** The combination of these three documents: the UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR), the INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, and the INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS.
- 10. INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR) 1966** declaring that all people have a broad range of civil and political rights. One of three components of the INTERNATIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS.
- 11. INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR) 1966** declaring that all people have a broad range of economic, social, and cultural rights. One of three components of the INTERNATIONAL BILL OF RIGHTS.
- 12. MONITORING MECHANISM** A system described in a TREATY to monitor how governments comply with their treaty obligations. Most treaties establish a treaty committee that reviews reports submitted by states and NGOs and in some cases receives complaints about violations of that treaty.
- 13. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)** Organizations formed by people outside of government. NGOs monitor the proceedings of human rights bodies such as the Human Rights Council and are the “watchdogs” of the human rights that fall within their mandate. Some are large and international (e.g., the Red Cross, Amnesty International); others may be small and local (e.g., a community-based organization to advocate for people with disabilities). NGOs play a major role in influencing UN policy, and many of them have official consultative status at the UN.
- 14. OPTIONAL PROTOCOL** A separate agreement that covers only a certain aspect of the CONVENTION. For example, Disability Rights Convention has an Optional Protocol that gives the monitoring body the power to hear individual complaints of violations of civil, political, social economic and cultural rights as articulated in the Convention. Optional Protocols must be separately signed and ratified by each State Party.
- 15. RATIFICATION, RATIFY** Formal procedure by which a country becomes bound to a treaty.

- 16. RESERVATION** A formal statement made by a government when it RATIFIES a TREATY stating that it does not accept one or more of the legal obligation contained in the document.
- 17. SIGN** By signing a CONVENTION, countries signal their intent to become party to the CONVENTION but are not obligated to put into practice provisions of the CONVENTION. They must not, however, do anything that is contrary to the object and purpose of the CONVENTION.
- 18. TREATY** Formal agreement between states that defines and modifies their mutual duties and obligations; used synonymously with CONVENTION.
- 19. UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR) (1948)**  
Primary UN document establishing human rights standards and norms. Although the DECLARATION was not intended to be legal binding, through time its various provisions have become so respected by states that it can now be said to be customary international law.

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