

# AD HOC COMMITTEE ON A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

2<sup>nd</sup> Session (New York, 16 to 27 June 2003)

## INTRODUCTION

The second session of the **Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities** took place at United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York from 16 to 27 June. Over 100 delegates of member States, approximately a dozen UN agencies, and over 200 individuals from 42 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions, legal experts, disability specialists and advocates from around the globe met to express support and propose draft elements for a comprehensive international rights-based convention for persons with disabilities. The two-week standard-setting session featured vigorous participation of NGOs and use of communications technologies to facilitate the inclusion of non-attending Persons with Disabilities (PWD) worldwide.

During the first two days of debate, the majority of States participating in the Ad-Hoc Committee expressed clear support for and underlined the necessity of a new convention for PWD. By the end of the second week a consensus was reached on the formation of a **Working Group** to draft a negotiating text for consideration by the Ad Hoc Committee at its third session, representing concrete progress toward the realisation of a new internationally binding treaty.

## BACKGROUND

The **World Health Organisation** (WHO) estimates that there are **600 million disabled adults** and children throughout the world, 80 percent living in developing nations. Persons with disabilities (PWD) are routinely subjected to **discrimination** in a wide range of social contexts, including the workplace, schools, healthcare facilities, government and recreational facilities. Lack of access to basic needs such as housing, education, healthcare, employment and mobility in the environment has resulted in extreme poverty, social exclusion and poor health. Exclusion and **unequal access to resources** are only part of the picture. PWD often face human rights abuses, including **involuntary institutionalisation** and **incarceration, forced abortion, sterilisation** and **psychiatric drugging**.

As a socially and economically disempowered group, PWD have little or no influence in public policy process and have consistently been excluded from participating in decisions that affect their daily survival. While some governments and societies have adopted a social inclusion and rights-based approach to disability issues, many still rely on an outdated **charity model** or a narrow medical model which spotlights medical "solutions" without addressing the socio-economic reality of disability.

National or international legal mechanisms designed to protect and promote the rights of PWD are nonexistent or inadequate and reinforce stereotypical perceptions of PWD. Disability has traditionally not been prioritised on the agendas of international human rights institutions, and the mainstream movement has yet to mark disability as a core human rights concern.

While the rights of individuals with disabilities are protected within a broad human rights framework based on the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** and the **International Bill of Human Rights**, no explicit mention is made of discrimination on the grounds of disability. Growing awareness of this deficiency has led to the realisation that the rights of PWD should be the subject of a specialised convention elaborating the full range of human rights, including monitoring and implementation mechanisms, and that PWD themselves should play a leadership role in mainstreaming disability within existing human rights

instruments.

## OVERVIEW

The **World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons**, adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 37th regular session on 3 December 1982, pursuant to resolution 37/52, sought an "*analysis of the situation of disabled persons...within the context of different levels of economic and social development and different cultures*"<sup>1</sup>. It recognised that the international community could be an effective force in preventing causes of disability, including disease, malnutrition, environmental pollution, poor hygiene and inadequate healthcare, and specifically emphasises that the ultimate responsibility for addressing the conditions and consequences of disability rests with Governments.

Efforts by states such as **Mexico** and **Ireland** have maintained the momentum for treaty development. General Assembly resolution 56/168 of 19 December 2001, initiated by **Mexico**, established an **Ad Hoc Committee** "*to consider proposals for a comprehensive and integral international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, based on the holistic approach in the work done in the fields of social development, human rights and non-discrimination*".

The first session of the Ad Hoc Committee, which took place from 29 July to 9 August 2002 at the UN, New York, highlighted "*a shift in focus from care, social welfare and medical support to an emphasis on the human rights framework necessary to pursue the goals of full participation of persons with disabilities in economic, social and political life, and development on the basis of equality*"<sup>2</sup>. At that meeting, the Ad Hoc Committee recommended that deliberations would continue at a second session to be held in New York, in May/June 2003. The primary goal going into the 2003 session was to affirm the need for a new convention within the UN system.

## THE SECOND AD HOC COMMITTEE

The first week of the session began with a **review of progress** in the elaboration of a convention and a **global policy assessment of issues and trends** related to the advancement of persons with disabilities. Governments, bodies within the UN system and NGOs delivered statements expressing their views on the proposed convention and reported results of regional meetings and seminars. **Panel discussions on priority themes** were interspersed between debates on the contributions to the proposals for a convention, including its nature and structure, elements, monitoring and complementarity with existing instruments.

### Progress in the elaboration of the convention

Concerning the progress in the elaboration of the convention, statements were submitted by among others **Japan**, the **Philippines**, **Costa Rica**, the **United States of America (USA)**, **Jordan**, **Morocco**, **Qatar**, **South Africa**, **Lebanon**, **Norway**, **Syria**, **China**, **Chile**, the **Philippines**, **Brazil**, **Israel**, **Peru**, the **Russian Federation**, **Liechtenstein** and **Fiji**, who described regional initiatives to support the Convention and promote the rights of PWD, in the form of legislative reforms, regional conferences and assistance programs.

**Morocco**, **Namibia** and **South Africa** highlighted the multiple discrimination faced by women, children, refugees and other vulnerable PWD, and raised issues of particular concern to African countries including poverty, AIDS, good governance and conflict. **Jordan**, **Palestine** and **Syria** raised the issue of disabilities resulting from conflict and foreign occupation, while **Lebanon**, **Qatar** and **Chile** emphasised the need for action to ensure employment rights and

---

<sup>1</sup> Objectives, Background and Concepts, World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ad Hoc Committee on Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Begins First-Ever Meeting*, Press Release HR/4618, 29/07/2002.

access for PWD. **Cuba** mentioned the universal **right to development** and the need for new definitions of disability, accessibility, accommodation, integration and inclusion. Many states pointed to disparities in levels of development as an area of concern, and restated the necessity of strong enforcement mechanisms. The **World Bank** committed to mainstreaming disability into their activities, building knowledge-sharing partnerships and collaborating financial and human resources.

### **Contributions to proposals for a convention**

**Greece**, on behalf of the **EU**, circulated a **draft resolution** mandating a new convention and calling for the **establishment of a group of experts** elected by intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), NGOs, governments and other stakeholders to issue a draft convention that would form the basis of negotiations at the next Ad Hoc Committee session. **Mexico**, **Venezuela** and **New Zealand** voiced support for a comprehensive, inclusive, binding, rights-based treaty supporting proactive state action and the establishment of a committee of experts, including PWD. New Zealand suggested the creation of a regionally diverse group including states and NGO/PWD representatives to draft a convention text inter-sessionally. **Canada** echoed the importance of a new treaty for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the need for a "*dynamic, efficient and effective process ...[to] do this right*".

The marginalisation and exclusion of PWD due to poverty was a major concern for many developing nations, including **Brazil** and **Peru**. Other nations such as **Nigeria**, **India**, and **Indonesia** urged that levels of development should be taken into account and addressed in terms of resource allocation. Several states stressed that special attention should be paid to vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly, refugees, or those with multiple disabilities who face many levels of discrimination. **Qatar**, the **Russian Federation**, **Liechtenstein** and **Kuwait** reiterated the goal of international consensus toward broad ratification, with **Peru**, **Nigeria**, **Jordan**, **Australia**, **Indonesia**, **India** and **Fiji** and **India** urging partnerships, inclusion and involvement of all stakeholders, especially PWD, toward a holistic, high standard instrument based upon a hybrid model, which **Israel**, **Kuwait** and the **Russian Federation** agreed could provide clear legal and policy guidelines to promote human rights on the local level. **Indonesia**, the **Russian Federation** and **Jordan** expressed the need for a strong monitoring mechanism. **Japan** was wary that the inclusion of social development may "*derail*" the process and suggested that at this stage, talk on types of convention detracts time that could be used to discuss content.

The **Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights** (OHCHR) applauded the reversal of the marginalisation of human rights for PWD, and requested that funds be provided for NGOs to attend future Ad Hoc Committee sessions. Several NGOs spoke, including **International Disability Caucus**, **Disabled Peoples International** (DPI) and **World Federation for the Deaf**, on issues such as accessibility, housing, right to family, voting and freedom from confinement. The **International Service for Human Rights** (ISHR) gave a statement on behalf of ISHR, the **François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights** and **Human Rights Watch** (HRW) supporting a specialised convention for PWDs.

**Secretary-General Kofi Annan** made a brief statement welcoming all participants to the UN, and applauded the "*important work*" taking place since the General Assembly passed the resolution establishing the Ad-Hoc Committee. He said it was time to "*give it meaning*," and emphasised his support for the Convention.

### **Nature and structure of the convention**

**South Africa** highlighted the need for a developmental approach within a legally binding framework. **Canada**, **Australia** and **New Zealand** underlined that the new convention should "*close gaps*" with existing instruments and avoid the "*proliferation of reporting mechanisms*". **Tunisia** advocated the inclusion of NGOs on all levels.

## Elements to be considered for the convention

**Greece** on behalf of the **European Union** (EU) urged that important elements of the Convention should be non-discrimination measures, equality of opportunity for PWD, and the need to pay special attention to those who may face multiple discrimination based on race, sex, religion and national origin. **Australia** stressed that the new Convention should be broad and thematic with a focus on sustainable improvement over time, but should not mention specific goals or targets in order to retain flexibility.

**India** advocated a "*multi-sectoral*" model that could be built into existing PWD community programs, covering health, employment, sexual exploitation and poverty negation. They stated that the Convention should specifically include the participation of family members of persons with intellectual or multiple disabilities and the right to information for PWD and their families. **China** agreed with the expressed views of developing countries, echoing the need for a binding instrument including universal rights in the context of PWD, taking into account cultural differences and varying levels of development.

**Colombia** recommended that in reference to structure, the binding Convention should be divided into four parts: a Preamble; general articles contemplating the principles of the Convention; special articles providing protection for PWD; and a section concerning monitoring and oversight. The Convention should cover all rights, based upon principles of equality, non-discrimination and participation. **New Zealand** urged the involvement of PWD at all phases of the process and stressed provisions for persons facing multiple discriminations such as women and minorities.

Several NGOs as well as the **International Disability Caucus** strongly supported a comprehensive Convention with strong non-discrimination elements combined with affirmative action measures to eliminate structural discrimination. The **European Disability Forum** spoke on the need for concrete provisions to oblige states to take positive action, such as awareness-raising campaigns. "*Nothing about us without us*" was an oft-repeated motto of many of the organisations and NGOs representing peoples with disabilities attending the Committee.

## Follow-up and monitoring

The **USA** commented on the integration of PWD into mainstream society as active participants in decision-making. This would involve air and land transportation accessibility, equal opportunity to gainful employment with reasonable accommodation in the workplace, education appropriate to specific needs based on individual determination of needs, public access to documents in Braille, ramps, voting booths in accessible locations, physical access plans in new building construction, accessible telecommunications, housing with accessible features and healthcare, including for those with psychiatric disabilities.

The **EU**, **Australia** and **Thailand** stated that the Convention should be a balanced, realistic instrument with an effective but streamlined monitoring mechanism to raise levels of understanding of obligations. **Japan** acknowledged a need to examine with care the additional burden that will be created by a new monitoring system, but pointed out that the government's obligation to report should be seen not as an onerous burden but should be regarded as facilitating the protection and promotion of rights of PWD and establishing a dialogue between states and groups of experts.

The **OHCHR** clarified that since human rights law imposes positive state obligations to accommodate the needs of PWD, failures on the part of the state constitute a violation of human rights. The **International Labour Organisation** (ILO) reiterated its stance that follow up and monitoring should build on current instruments in human rights machinery.

NGOs such as the **Landmine Survivors Network** (LSN) and **International Disability Caucus** urged that an effective monitoring mechanism should be consistent with state monitoring practices, "*otherwise, it will merely another document in the collection of ineffective instruments*", and reflected that the strength of a treaty often depends upon

strong domestic processes and systems. A technical advisory body should be established to advise on technical issues regarding the Convention, including guidelines for accessibility, development and humanitarian assistance.

### **Complementarity between a new instrument and existing instruments**

The **EU**, **Canada** and **Australia** expressed their convictions that a new Convention should incorporate provisions within existing human rights treaties, particularly the six core treaties, without undermining or duplicating the established human rights architecture. **Canada** pointed out that complementarity between treaties and monitoring mechanisms was necessary to maintain consistency. The UN standard rules can function as instruments of "*policy-making and action*" but require expeditious refining and updating to reflect the specific concerns of PWD. A new Convention should mirror efforts to mainstream the disability perspective and promote a rights-based, not medical or welfare approach. **Australia** mentioned the report of the UN High Commissioner as an important resource.

The **International Disability Alliance** (IDA), **Inclusion International** and the **World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry** intervened to urge a comprehensive inclusion of all disabilities. The **World Federation of the Deaf** on behalf of the **International Disability Caucus** stated that a new Convention could raise the visibility of the disabled.

### **Next steps in the consideration of a convention**

**Cuba**, **Canada**, **Colombia**, **Jamaica**, **Costa Rica**, **Guatemala**, **Brazil**, **Mexico**, **Thailand**, **Venezuela**, **China**, and **Ecuador** stated it was time to take concrete steps toward a draft document from which to begin negotiations.

The **International Disability Caucus** appreciated States' initiatives to support civil participation and maintain transparency. They reiterated that since the legitimacy of a human rights treaty depends upon the inclusion of civil society groups, it is imperative to allocate funds that allow NGOs to participate.

### **Panel sessions**

Several panel sessions were interspersed throughout the formal debates. One panel examined the **typology of International Conventions**, and discussed how existing instruments could provide guidance in elaborating a new convention, especially one built upon the idea of incorporating norms with an equal emphasis on human rights and social development<sup>3</sup>. Panel members<sup>4</sup> explored three convention models: 1) the **holistic rights-model**, after the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC), which is broad but comprehensively embraces all rights; 2) the **non-discrimination model** after the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which do not entail new rights, but underline the exercise of existing ones; and 3) the **hybrid model**, which combines non-discrimination and equality with rights guarantees tailored to PWD.

There was discussion on the substantive and procedural aspects of the three models, including monitoring mechanisms. Several panelists suggested that human rights for PWD should be addressed in a "*multi-pronged*" approach, which includes a new convention, mainstreaming disability into the human rights system, and continuing work with the UN Standard Rules and World Programme of Action. Panelists agreed that a non-discrimination model imposed **only negative obligations** on the state whereas a holistic model demands **proactive measures**.

Delegations of **Tunisia**, **Venezuela**, **Colombia**, **South Africa** and **Thailand** expressed

---

<sup>3</sup> Chairman's Summary, A/AC.265/2003/CRP.14, 27 June 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Muna Ndulo (Zambia), Velina Todorova (Bulgaria), Andrew Byrnes (Australia) and Deepika Udagama (Sri Lanka).

general support for a new convention. **Mexico** voiced preference for a holistic model, while the **EU**, advocated a new rights-based approach within a non-discrimination model as more effective and symbolic of the transition from a welfarist to human rights-focused approach.

Another panel examined how to assess from the disability perspective **non-discrimination and equality within the existing human rights framework**, and critical issues pertaining to equalisation of opportunity for PWD in light of the elaboration of a new convention. The four experts<sup>5</sup> who participated on the panel placed emphasis on anti-discrimination measures and reasonable accommodation. **Ambassador Despouy** of **Argentina** traced the history of human rights and disability, noting that unlike 20 years ago the UN now clearly accepts the link between the two issues. He outlined three principles essential to drafting an international covenant for PWD: 1) equal rights for all; 2) indivisibility of rights; and 3) exercise of these rights.

During the questions and answer session, **Uganda** raised the issue of disparate levels of development, to which a panelist cited CEDAW as an example of progressive realisation. **Greece** and the **EU** questioned the obligation of the state in providing housing and employment, to which the panel responded that economic, social and cultural rights impose positive obligations. **China** asked about the relationship between civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, to which a panelist explained non-discrimination as the overarching principle. Delegates from **New Zealand, Mexico, Senegal, Canada, Australia, Thailand, Uganda** and **Venezuela** also voiced enthusiastic support for a new, comprehensive, and legally binding international convention enshrining the principles of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

A third panel examined **new and emerging approaches to definitions of disability: conceptual frameworks, varying contexts of definition, and implications for the promotion of the rights of PWD**. Three panelists<sup>6</sup> explored critical concepts that could have impact on international legislation and policy. They aimed not to reach a definition of disability, but to approach an understanding of the scope of a Convention. There was more of a focus on context variables and accessibility, which they felt was more important than a definition of disability.

During the question and answer period, **Greece, on behalf of the EU**, believed it was too early to narrow down a definition of disability, and asked if a definition was essential, translatable on the state level and appropriate at this time. The panelists responded that it was not achievable or necessary at this time to define disability, and too early to implement within state legal frameworks. **Thailand** stated that regardless of a definition of disability, accessibility certainly had to *be "defined, described and incorporated in the Convention"* from the local level up.

Several NGOs including **LSN** and **IDA** responded to the panelists. **DPI** and the **International Disability Caucus** commented on the usefulness of the sociological and cross-cultural views presented, reiterating that a definition should be *"simple and broad"* and reflect the *"lived realities"* of PWD.

### **Working Group: a joint effort by the EU, Mexico and New Zealand**

The last week revolved around a proposal by the **EU, Mexico** and **New Zealand** to form a Working Group entrusted with the task of drafting the text of a convention for consideration by member states of the Ad Hoc Committee. The document is divided into seven items: 1) Mandate of the Working Group; 2) Structure: 25 governmental representatives divided and nominated by regional groups and 10 NGO representatives from organisations of PWD, to be nominated by them; 3) a "Voluntary Fund" to finance the participation of NGOs from developing countries; 4) Inter-sessional Working Group meetings at the UN in New York; 5)

---

<sup>5</sup> H. E. Ambassador Leandro Despouy (Argentina), Dr. Rangita de Silva de Alwis (Sri Lanka), Ms Charlotte McClain (South Africa) and Ms Cynthia Waddell (the USA).

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Scott Brown (the USA), Dr. Catherine Barral (France), Dr. Kofi Marfo (Ghana).

Inclusionary nature of the new draft text; 6) Secretary-General will provide the Working Group with all relevant *documentation "in a timely manner"*; and 7) the resulting presentation will be translated in all UN languages and circulated "*no later than two months*" prior to the Third Session of the Ad Hoc Committee.<sup>7</sup>

A general spirit of appreciation marked the participatory effort, and there was widespread agreement on keeping NGOs active in the drafting process. Many States requested that all documentation be available in accessible formats such as Braille, Sign Language, audio, electronic and others.

Several delegations had questions on item two regarding deadlines and rationale behind nominations, voicing concern for an "*equitable balance of power*" and inclusion of developing states. The **Sudan** and **South Africa** stressed "*meaningful participation from the South*". Many States supported the equitable geographical representation of civil groups and the inclusion of experts and national human rights institutions. Some asked whether only ECOSOC accredited NGOs could be selected. **Thailand** suggested raising the number of NGO representatives to twelve, which **Chile** and **Jamaica** supported.

Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup> marked a crossroads in the proceedings of this Ad Hoc Committee. States began informal consultations, but reconvened in formal sessions in the afternoon to discuss changes. Major alterations include two options for determining representation in Item two - first by region and second by equitable geographical representation. The most controversial issue centred on the composition of the Working Group. Membership allocation within the UN is based upon a method of geographical representation dating back to the Cold War that often does not reflect the reality of today's world. Many regions are under-represented, including Eastern Europe, the Arab speaking nations, and the Asia-Pacific region. This concern becomes particularly acute within the context of designating a Working Group to draft the text upon which an international human rights treaty will be constructed. Asia, for example, is a large and diverse region of countries with varying levels of development, comprising 2/3 of PWD, which under the present system would receive only five representatives.

Although widespread support for an active NGO role in the negotiating process appeared to be a goal of nearly all States; some delegates asked for specific changes that in fact indicated their deep ambivalence about a participatory NGO role. **Pakistan** expressed dissatisfaction with the increase in the number of NGOs from seven to 12. He acknowledged their "*expertise and awareness*", but felt the role of NGOs should be "*advisory in character*" and their contributions "*channelised*". **Iran's** principle concern was the composition of the Working Group, in particular the inclusion of NGOs. He did not oppose their participation, but remarked that he had never seen a comparable combination of States and NGOs working "*on an equal status*" and cautioned against the invention of "*something new within UN framework*". He believed the Group should be comprised only of Member States "*assisted*" by NGOs and experts. **Nepal** and **Malaysia** felt that while NGOs have a "*big role to play*", an "*established method based on precedent*" for their inclusion is best way to move forward in the UN context.

**Thailand** and **Morocco**, amongst others, suggested including national human rights institutions, perhaps as a separate category. The **Irish Human Rights Commission** argued that excluding national human rights institutions would weaken the composition of the Working Group.

Debate came down to the wire. Until past scheduled time on Friday **Morocco**, **Cuba** and **Malaysia** raised issues of NGO accreditation, modalities of participation and Chair appointment. All relented in the "*spirit of flexibility*", and by 6:30 p.m., without interpretation or the aid of a microphone, the **Chair** submitted to the Committee the draft Decision and Report for approval. Facing no objections, he declared the Report and Decision as adopted. The final draft went in favour of regional representation. The number of NGOs was increased to twelve. A seat was also allotted for a human rights institution within the Working Group. It

---

<sup>7</sup> The final text is available at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/adhoc2decision.htm>.

was also decided that the Working Group would participate in two five-day inter-sessional meetings to draft a negotiating document.

## CONCLUSION

By the next Ad Hoc Committee meeting in 2004, a new draft text will be available upon which to begin precise negotiations toward the establishment of a new rights-based Convention that could change the lives of millions of disabled persons. The process of developing, implementing and monitoring an international convention on the human rights of people with disabilities will be crucial in helping form a framework for international cooperation and provide opportunities to assess shortcomings in domestic models of disability law and policy. A new treaty will also provide international legal accountability regarding disability rights and act as an authoritative universal reference point for domestic law and policy initiatives. It will clarify the content of human rights principles and their application to people with disabilities, provide more effective monitoring mechanisms, and raise awareness about the human rights of people with disabilities. Finally, by drawing long-awaited public attention to their issues, it could offer capacity-building opportunities for disability groups.

However, for the envisioned convention to be truly effective, a good-faith effort at collaboration between member states and NGOs is crucial. According to the UN's **Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities**, PWD have the right to participate in decision-making that will ultimately affect their human rights. The process of putting flesh on the bones of a new international human rights instrument must include PWD on all levels of decision-making and at all stages of the process; only in that way can the new treaty truly represent the aspirations and experience of the people it seeks to protect.

## Resources

Since the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee in July 2003 there has been input from governmental organisations, NGOs and others in open fora, located online at <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/adhocinputs.htm#NGOs>.

The following documents contain information on the evolution of disability within the human rights framework:

- Notes from submitted views concerning comprehensive and integral international convention on the protection and promotion of the rights and dignity of PWD (A/AC.265/2003/4).
- Report of the Secretary-General on an overview of issues and trends related to the advancement of PWD (A/AC.265/2003/2).
- Report of the Secretary-General on progress in the equalisation of opportunities by, for and with PWD (A/AC.265/2003/3).
- Report of the Secretary-General on issues and emerging trends related to the advancement of PWD (A/AC.265/2003/1).
- A series of key national and regional consultations took place since last year's Ad Hoc Committee meeting with support of the UN. The outcomes of five are available as Conference Room Papers.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Regional Seminar and Regional Demonstration Workshop on Accessible ICT design and PWD, Manila, the Philippines (3 to 7 March 2003); The Americas Regional Seminar and Workshop on Norms and Standards Related to the Rights of PWD and Development Health, Quito, Ecuador (9 to 11 April 2003); African Regional Consultative Conference, Johannesburg, South Africa (1 to 6 May 2003); Western Asia Regional Seminar and Workshop on Norms and Standards Related to Developments in the Rights of PWD, Beirut, Lebanon (27 to 29 May 2003). Expert Group Meeting and Seminar on International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of PWD, Bangkok, Thailand (2 to 4 June 2003).