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Ban urges inclusion of persons with disabilities into society



Disabled workers at a chalk factory in Ghana's capital, Accra

2 December 2011 –

[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon called for governments, civil society and the global community to work alongside persons with disabilities, saying their participation is essential to achieve inclusive and sustainable development worldwide.

In his message marking the [International Day for Persons with Disabilities](#), Mr. Ban said that although there has been significant progress in raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and many countries have committed to protect their rights through international agreements, they still experience unequal conditions.

“Persons with disabilities experience higher rates of poverty and deprivation and are twice as likely to lack health care,” Mr. Ban [said](#). “Employment rates of persons with disabilities in some countries are as low as one third of that of the overall population.”

This year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities reminds us that development can only be sustainable when it is equitable, inclusive and accessible for all.

An estimated 15 per cent of the world’s population has a disability and over two thirds of persons with disabilities live in developing countries, where the gap in primary school attendance rates between children with disabilities and others ranges from 10 per cent to 60 per cent.

“This multi-dimensional exclusion represents a huge cost, not only to persons with disabilities but to society as a whole. This year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities reminds us that development can only be sustainable when it is equitable, inclusive and accessible for all,” Mr. Ban said.

“Persons with disabilities need therefore be included at all stages of development processes, from inception to monitoring and evaluation,” he added.

Echoing Mr. Ban’s remarks, General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser [said](#) development cannot be inclusive without implementing policies and programmes to help persons with disabilities.

“As we work towards the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and as the agreed date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) approaches, let us seize all opportunities to ensure the inclusion of disability in the development agenda post-2015,” he said.

Mr. Al-Nasser stressed that States already have the tools to make progress on this issue and urged countries which have not done so to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“Worldwide, the link between disability, poverty and social exclusion is clear and direct. Yet we have at our finger tips international human rights instruments that protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities,” Mr. Al-Nasser said in his message for the day, celebrated tomorrow.

“It is only if the convention is implemented at the national level that it can have any positive impact on the lives of persons with disabilities,” he added.

The convention, which came into force in 2008, aims to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities. It has been signed by 153 States and ratified by 107.

“The vast majority of UN Member States have recognized the importance of respecting the rights of men, women and children with disabilities to the same quality of life as others,” [said](#) UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay. “They must now urgently set about making the

promise of the convention a reality, including by ensuring that individuals with disabilities are not disenfranchised.”

Ms. Pillay also stressed that countries need to remove obstacles that prevent persons with disabilities from exercising their political rights, saying that they are “often prevented from exercising this right because of discriminatory laws, the lack of accessible voting booths or because electoral material and information is not available in accessible formats such as sign language and Braille.

“Such obstacles prevent the exercise of one of the most fundamental human rights – to have a say in one’s own government,” she said.

As part of the celebrations for the Day, a series of events have been organized at UN Headquarters in New York today, including panel discussions on strengthening the data and statistics on disability for informed policy-making and integrating disability issues into global development reports. In the afternoon, the Enable Film Festival (EFF) will showcase films and documentaries on persons with disabilities from around the world.

The annual observance of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December was established in 1981 during the International Year for Disabled Persons. The Day aims to promote a better understanding of disability issues with a focus on the rights of people with disabilities and the gains that could be derived from integrating them better in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life of their communities.

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