

March 21,2007

THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

Thursday, March 15, 2007, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Background Information: On December 13, 2007, The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the first Human Rights treaty of the twenty-first century. This was adopted with a vote. The Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees the same rights to disabled people allowed to the rest of the population. This treaty recognizes persons with disabilities as rights holders and active members of society.

Moderator:

Juan Carlos Brandt, Chair, NGO/DPI

Speakers:

Mr. Jorge Ballestro, Counselor Minister, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations

Mr. Thomas Schindlmayr, Social Affairs Officer,
Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Dr. Fredrik Schroeder, Representative, International Disabilities Caucus,
World Blind Union

1. At 10:00 AM – 10:30 AM there was a screening of the World Chronicle program, “Towards a Convention on Disabilities”. This film featured Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Convention of Disabled People. The film showed how people with disabilities are made useful. It also showed how these people can have independent lives and retain their Dignity. The film also showed how children in Africa are being stigmatized because they could not walk upright

Ambassador Gallegos is working for an international Convention to help disabled People. He spoke of problems of people with disabilities that is growing world wide and how to address it. Ignoring people with disabilities are not the answer.

He stated that you cannot limit anyone by gender or disability. Computers allow people with a disability to be useful and functional. The rights and dignity of disabled people are very important. Ambassador Gallegos stated that we must for this stigma. The political society in each area must address this

Ambassador Gallegos indicated that the United Nations is setting a Convention to Address this problem. This will include wheel chairs to help these people. They Must be provided to these people especially in undeveloped countries. They are an expensive undertaking. He concluded with the comment that there are a lot successful programs in the developed world.

2. The Moderator, Juan Carlos Brandt welcomed everyone introduced each of the speakers present and their backgrounds.

3. The first speaker, Counselor Minister Ballestro, has an extensive background on the subject of this session in Costa Rica. Mr. Thomas Schindlmayr at this point stood up and indicated that he was proud to be here in this session with Minister Ballestro.

Mr. Ballestro indicated that the Disability Convention will bring people from Disability to hope. The Disability Conventions is an extensive development for Human Rights.

When we talk about persons with disabilities, we talk about all the people. We all have the same rights. He indicated that he wants us to focus on the Convention on life and human relationships.

Civil society was willing to have human rights. More engagements with NGOs will ensure the understanding and cooperation of Civil Society. He stated that it was important for NGOs and Civil Society to get all governments to sign the Convention accord.

4. The second speaker was Mr. Thomas Schindlmayr. The moderator apologized that Mr. Schondlmayr could not sit on the stage. He is in a wheel chair and there was no easy way to move him on the stage so he faced us from the front side of the auditorium. He has worked at the United Nations for four years.

He indicated that the Convention will counter past prejudices against persons with Disabilities. Mr. Schondlmayr showed that this Convention was long overdue. He credited NGOs for their role in having the Convention and it till be a success. Mr. Schondlmayr stated that it has a long way to go but feels it will be successful.

5. The third speaker was Dr. Fedrik Schroeder. He is blind. He has published over forty articles on the subject of this conference. Their participation in the Convention on the Rights of the Disabled was to show respect for the disabled. He stated that the disabled were just looking for rights that we all have not any special rights.

The difference is between a gift and an investment. A gift is nothing expected in return but an investment is something that is expected. It is related to how we make investments in New York City and how they make gains.

Dr. Schroeder stated that not helping those with disabilities will result in much higher costs for all of us. Those with disabilities must lead productive lives.

6. Questions/Answers:

6.1 Thomas Schindlmayer agrees that the use of the word disabled is incorrect and should not be used. The word used should be impaired.

6.2 Dr. Schroeder agreed that the word disabled stigmatizes a person and should not be used.

6.3 In answer to another question, Dr. Schroeder indicated that education is an investment. How we allocate these resources is one of shared values. We must include these investments with those with disabilities. Thus we make it possible to integrate people with disabilities into society.

6.4 Mr. Ballestero indicated that we should aim for universal benefits for everyone.

6.5 Mr. Schindlmayer stated that if attitudes change many of our disabilities would not be there. He indicated that the Caucus of Persons with Disabilities are represented by seventy NGOs.

6.6 Dr. Schroeder stated that it was most important that we change the attitudes on Disabilities. The low expectations held by all of us include the disabled people themselves. Society must change their attitudes on this. He referenced the Act on this subject passed by the United States reaffirming to people with disabilities that they also have rights.

6.7 Mr. Ballestero indicated that mobility can be a big help for these people by providing them with more chairs and giving them more access to the outside world. Any help provided must include the education of students in schools, etc. This is complicated but the change of attitudes is important.

6.8 Mr. Schindlmayer added that governments must do more right away to inform everyone of the rights of the disabled. The word Disabled must be filtered down. Helping people with disabilities will help extend the forum of requirements.

7. Conclusions by Speakers:

7.1 Mr. Thomas Schindlmayr; We are here now because the Convention of the Disabled will take place in two weeks. This session is important.

7.2 Dr. Federik Schroeder; If we respect people with disabilities we respect everyone. People with disabilities do not have to be ashamed.

7.3 Mr. Jorge Ballester; We must not be selfish. We must of our selves. It will help the world. On March 30 at the Convention, the member Nations of the United Nations will be signing the document for the Disabled.

DPI/NGO PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 15, 2007, 1:15 PM – 2:30 PM

Moderators:

Richard Jordan, Co-Chair

Juan Carlos Brandt, NGO/DPI Chair

1. Richard Jordan, moderator, welcomed everyone and introduced Juan Carlos Brandt who welcomed a guest to our session from the Dominican Republic who did not speak. He turned the mantle back over to Mr. Jordan.

This part of a series of planning meetings preparing for the September, 2007 conference at the United Nations where NGOs from all over the World attend.

We discussed the selection of a keynote speaker or speakers. We recommended That Co-Chair Richard Jordan be given full support to invite President Hernandez of the Dominican Republic to the Conference to speak if possible. He is considered very qualified. He was an NGO was elected president of the Dominican Republic for a second term. This was agreed to by this committee.

The policy on the re-imbusement of speakers was brought up. In the past the answer was no. We have no budget for this. We agreed that this must be stated in the original letter sent to the accepted speaker. This committee only makes recommendations for the best speakers.

It was recommended to the Executive Committee that wording be placed in any letter diplomatically going to a speaker. The official policy is that there is no money for speakers but that should not be stated in the letter. Subsequent funding is based on need.

We were asked to continue giving recommendations for speakers for the Round table sessions indicating what they are best suited for and why.

2. The Media subcommittee indicated that it needs help from people, who are looking into Media, and they should notify the Media Subcommittee ahead of time.
3. The Networking subcommittee, of which I am a member, will be inviting the State of New Jersey representative who is most responsible for the subject of Global Warming to come to the next Networking subcommittee meeting for discussions.
4. The Multi-generation Subcommittee is coming up with a broad statement on how we will be affected by Global Warming. They would like to schedule mid-day workshops for all speakers (coming globally) to speak on this and bring up the issue of older/younger people affected. They want to focus on people not just issues. I initially brought up the subject of Global Warming as a key subject.

Each member of this committee would act as the liaison to one agency. The full Planning committee will take the lead if agreed. We would provide the follow-up. The web site for this is www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii. The web site is scheduled to ready by the last two weeks in May. We are to receive information on this.

Recommendation was made that we should make a connection with schools on The subject of Global Warming and their environmental connections as part of our effort. The Events Sub-Committee will list all organizations in the journal that they hand out at the Conference and donations received and from whom.

5. On July 7, Al Gore is setting up a video concert on Global Warming called "Live Earth".

NETWORKING SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, March 15, 2007, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

1. Moderator, William Gellermann, welcomed everyone. He set up a date on The “Web Conferencing” Conferencing” and how it can improve and expand the September Conference. We will do it on Thursday, March 29, 2007. They will be sending out information on this. Local to local dialogues were proposed by “Habitat” to discuss “Climate Change” with a communication interaction. If the test works then we will be able apply this but we will need before we do this.

2. I gave a summary of how the Jewish War Veterans use Teleconferencing through out the Country to provide interaction and provide everyone with information. If the local to local dialogues work as proposed by “Habitat” then as a back up we can use video conferencing from the United Nations a week after the September Conference and see where it takes us. It will be sent to a moderator to prevent “Spam” at www.ngo/networking@google.com.

3. Computer conferencing will be again sent to us at the following Web site; www.yaleprojecton-climatechange@google.com. Members of the committee are also looking into clergy taking part in the discussion on climate change.

4. These proposals have to go thru the Mid-Workshop Committee by March 26. They need early returns to line up funds. They also have to give a chance to people who come to the conference to relate to each other after the conference. This is a way of interaction by NGOs with organizations like labor, elected officials, and manufacturers, etc.

This would get implemented by sending letters to agencies, etc to see if they are Interested. Each member of this committee would act as a liaison to one agency. The Planning Committee would take the lead on this proposal. We would provide the follow up. The question to all of us is how do we use the September Conference to affect a change in the world’s environment.

PDC George Weinstein
National UN Chairman