



STATEMENT BY MR. AJAI MALHOTRA, AMBASSADOR/DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, DURING THE HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE CONVENED ON THE OCCASION OF SIGNING OF INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE PERSON WITH DISABILITIES ON MARCH 30, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

We are happy to participate in this High Level Dialogue convened on the occasion of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

It gives us great satisfaction to have been associated closely with the processes leading to the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UN General Assembly in December 2006. We are honoured to sign the Convention on the very first day that it has opened for signature. Our special thanks go to you, Ambassador MacKay and to Ambassador Gallegos for successfully steering the work of the Ad Hoc Committee that elaborated the Convention. We would also like to commend the role of the International Disability Caucus and other NGOs throughout the process.

Mr. Chairman,

As per India's 2001 census, there are 21.9 million persons with disabilities in India, including those with visual, hearing, speech, locomotor and mental disabilities. The Constitution of India implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all, including persons with disabilities. The enactment of the Persons with Disability Act in 1995 and subsequent legislative and institution-building measures, have paved the way for the further realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. The National Policy for Disabled People (2006) spells out our goals towards promoting a broad commitment to the accessibility, autonomy and equality of opportunity for those with disabilities. Apart from strengthening national level implementation mechanisms, we have already set in motion the process for amending the Persons with Disability Act of 1995, drawing upon the lessons learnt so far.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenges before us in implementation of the Convention – at national, regional and international levels - are significant. Alongside ratification of the Convention by 20 countries and the establishment of the Treaty Body six months later, a decision on the location of this body would need to be taken. As the administrative mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention would be established by States Parties to it, parallel efforts should be undertaken to mainstream disability rights within the UN system.

The UN General Assembly should encourage relevant UN bodies to promote advocacy and awareness raising of the rights of persons with disabilities and also for the exchange of good practices in the implementation of disability rights. It should also effectively promote international cooperation, particularly by encouraging States to support capacity-building, technical and economic assistance programmes to developing countries to assist them in implementation of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

India is committed to the early ratification of the Convention and will do its utmost to secure the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities. We would continue to work closely with all stakeholders particularly NGOs and civil society in our endeavours to realise the noble goals of the Convention.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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