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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by the European Disability Forum, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[14 February 2011]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **The right to human rights education and training**

This statement is by the European Disability Forum, on behalf of the International Disability Alliance<sup>1</sup>.

The International Disability Alliance welcomes Draft Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training being presented by the Platform. We emphasize that it must be ensured that persons with disabilities will benefit from human rights education and that the rights of persons with disabilities are considered an integral part of any mainstream human rights education.

Persons with disabilities are only since recently considered to be part of the human rights agenda. The declaration on human rights education and training can make an important contribution to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are fully taken into account in all initiatives in the field of human rights education.

With the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, there is a greater need than ever to include of the rights of persons with disabilities in human rights education and training, to make persons with disabilities and indeed the rest of societies aware of rights and obligations with respect to persons with disabilities.

The Draft declaration on human rights education and training will take an important and much needed step to recognize the culmination of existing human rights obligations on human rights education and training. The right to human rights education and training is a right unto itself as well as a right whose enjoyment affects and enables enjoyment of many if not all other rights.

Human rights and education is crucial to the full realization of all human rights. To know one's rights and enjoy equality and freedom requires education of the person and of others around them on the existence, fact, and content of one's rights, including the right to equality.

The right to human rights education and training that appears throughout the CRPD builds on previous UN instruments on the rights of persons with disabilities.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting the

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<sup>1</sup> Member Organizations: Disabled Peoples' International, Down Syndrome International, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the DeafBlind, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, Arab Organization of Disabled People, European Disability Forum, Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus familias (RIADIS), Pacific Disability Forum

<sup>2</sup> The UN declaration on the rights of persons with disabilities (1975) recognised the right of persons with disabilities, their families and communities to know and be fully informed about the rights of persons with disabilities. See paragraph 13, Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, GA resolution 3447 (XXX), 9 December 1974, which provided: "Disabled persons, their families and communities shall be fully informed, by all appropriate means, of the rights contained in this Declaration." The Standard Rules of 1994 also emphasized the importance of awareness raising, placing awareness-raising as "Rule 1" at the outset of the Standard Rules, and in the first section on "Preconditions for Equal Participation". It indicated that States needed "to take action to raise awareness in society about persons with disabilities, their rights, their needs, their potential and their contribution." Awareness-raising thus already included the concept of raising awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities. Awareness-raising of human rights is synonymous with human rights education. Necessary actions listed in the rule included: presenting information to persons with disabilities in accessible form, initiating and supporting information campaigns concerning persons with disabilities and disability policies, conveying the message that persons with disabilities are

importance of awareness-raising in the enjoyment of all rights, the CRPD contains a standalone article on this, article 8. It contains extensive obligations including those on human rights education. It requires that States Parties adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures to raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. States Parties must combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life, and promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities. Measures to this end include initiating and maintaining effective public awareness campaigns designed to nurture receptiveness to the rights of persons with disabilities, to promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities, and to promote recognition of the skills, merits and abilities of persons with disabilities, and of their contributions to the workplace and the labour market. States Parties must foster, at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as encourage all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the CRPD. They must also promote awareness-training programmes regarding persons with disabilities and the rights of persons with disabilities. From this it may be concluded that article 8 includes the right to human rights education and training. Persons with disabilities thus have the right to be educated themselves and to live in a society where other persons have also been educated about the rights of persons with disabilities.

The CRPD contains other human rights education and training obligations. Article 9 requires, in order to enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, that States Parties ensure accessibility to information and communications and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, as well as promulgation of accessibility standards and guidelines. It requires States Parties to provide training for stakeholders on accessibility.

Rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities are also dependent on provisions of human rights education and training. For example, the CRPD also includes State Party obligations to prevent torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment including "to take all effective legislative, administrative judicial or other measures"<sup>3</sup> that are needed. Such measures include human rights education and training of relevant persons and entities. States Parties are similarly obliged to take "all appropriate educational and other measures to protect persons with disabilities, both within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse, including their gender-based aspects."<sup>4</sup> Such measures include, inter alia, appropriate forms of gender- and age-sensitive assistance and support for persons with disabilities and their families and caregivers, including through the provision of information and education on how to avoid, recognize and report instances of exploitation, violence and abuse." Such education and training of rights holders and persons around them is part of the human rights obligations regarding freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse.

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citizens with the same rights and obligations as others, ensuring that public education programmes reflect in all their aspects the principle of full participation and equality, and, most significantly for the right to human rights education, initiating and promoting programmes aimed at raising the level of awareness of persons with disabilities concerning their rights and potential. It also emphasized the need for awareness raising in education of children with disabilities and rehabilitation programmes, stressing the need also for organizations of persons with disabilities to assist one another in awareness raising through their activities.

<sup>3</sup> Article 15 (2) CRPD.

<sup>4</sup> Article 16 (1) CRPD.

The CRPD also require States Parties to provide information and relevant services intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and languages.<sup>5</sup> Article 24 recognises the right of persons with disabilities to education and requires States Parties to ensure an inclusive education system, languages, communication methods and environments enabling learning at all levels and lifelong learning directed to, among other things, the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity. Peer support is also especially critical in education for persons with disabilities. Underlying this is the right to human rights education of the self and of others. It requires educating persons with disabilities about their equality and other rights.

With regard to dissemination, the CRPD and its Optional Protocol each require that they "be made available in accessible formats". (See article 49 CRPD and article 17 CRPD-OP). The Optional Protocol to CESCR also contains a provision requiring that States Parties make "widely known and to disseminate the Covenant and the present Protocol and to facilitate access to information about the views and recommendations of the Committee, in particular, on matters involving that State Party, and to do so in accessible formats for persons with disabilities" (article 16 CESCR-OP).

In conclusion, we make the following general recommendations on implementing human rights education and training obligations:

1. Persons with disabilities must fully be taken into account in all initiatives in the field of lifelong human rights education.
2. Human rights education and training programmes must actively reach out and consult, include and ensure active involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, in all phases of human rights education and training programmes, from planning to implementation and evaluation.
3. States Parties should implement the relevant provisions contained throughout the CRPD constituting obligations on human rights education and training.

Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>5</sup> Article 21 CRPD.