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REQUESTS ADDRESSED TO THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE STEMMING FROM HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

Joint written statement* submitted by the World Blind Union (WBU), the European Disability Forum (EDF), Inclusion International, the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IHFOH), Rehabilitation International (RI), the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), the World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDB), the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (WNUSP), non-governmental organizations 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.

[24 July 2009]

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

Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹

The above- mentioned organisations, members of International Disability Alliance (IDA), whose mission it is to promote the effective and full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities worldwide, as well as compliance with the CRPD within the UN system, through the active and coordinated involvement of representative organisations of persons with disabilities at national, regional and international levels would like to make the following suggestions to the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council:

Mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities in the work of the HRC Advisory Committee

The HRC resolution on the rights of persons with disabilities A/HRC/L27 adopted in 2008 included a paragraph requesting the Advisory Committee to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in its work.

IDA CRPD Forum is pleased to see that the Advisory Committee has already several times included the rights of persons with disabilities on its agenda and will deal with this issue again at its upcoming third session.

IDA CRPD Forum supports the need to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in the work of the Advisory Committee and would like to indicate that this mainstreaming needs to be based on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The new CRPD has resulted in a paradigm shift in the approach to the rights of persons with disabilities and it is important to take this into account when referring to persons with disabilities. Recent examples of the work of the Human Rights Council show that well intentioned references to persons with disabilities can inadvertently lead to references that are inconsistent with the CRPD.

In order to avoid such pitfalls, IDA CRPD Forum would like to propose that the Advisory Committee draft guidelines on mainstreaming the rights of persons with disabilities, pursuant to the existing initiative to draft gender mainstreaming guidelines.

Active involvement of representative organisations of persons with disabilities, as reflected in article 4 of the CRPD, should be a key element in such a document. IDA would be at the disposal of the Advisory Committee to support the drafting of such a document, which could also become a useful document for the Human Rights Council as a whole.

Human rights education

IDA CRPD Forum welcomes the various references to persons with disabilities found thus far in Human Rights Council draft documents, including a draft resolution on human rights education.

It is important that the rights of persons with disabilities are adequately taken into account in this important initiative of the Advisory Committee.

¹ Arab Organization of Disabled People (AODP), Asia Pacific Disability Forum (APDF), Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus Familias (RIADIS), Disabled Peoples' International (DPI), also share the views expressed in this statement.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which includes references to education and awareness-raising on human rights in a number of articles, provides the adequate framework on how to approach this issue.

Human rights education should be accessible to persons with disabilities:

This means that all materials and trainings are designed taking into account the rights of persons with disabilities. This would require sign language versions of the material and documents available in Braille as well as in plain language. Relevant web-based material would need to meet the internationally agreed accessibility standards (WAI). When training is provided, it should also be planned in such a way that persons with disabilities can take part. Full accessibility must be ensured by all relevant planning guidelines.

Accessibility is a key human rights element for persons with disabilities, and human rights education should therefore be delivered in a fully accessible way. Failure to do so could lead to the absurd situation of delivering education on human rights in a way that simultaneously breaches the rights of persons with disabilities.

While it might sometimes make sense to have some training targeting persons with disabilities in particular, the general assumption should be that persons with disabilities will be participating in mainstream human rights education activities.

The rights of persons with disabilities should be part of the human rights education

The recent entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has put persons with disabilities fully on the human rights agenda.

It is therefore important that human rights education includes the rights of persons with disabilities and that it does so based on the provisions of the CRPD.

When specific material or training is used to this end, a twin-track approach should be employed, combining a specific section on the rights of persons with disabilities (for instance, one which informs about the CRPD) with a mainstream approach by including references to persons with disabilities in relevant sections.

Participation of persons with disabilities as trainers

The active involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative NGOs in all issues affecting them is clearly recognised by the CRPD and applies also to this area.

It is important that persons with disabilities with experience in training and education and experience in human rights are involved in the preparation of relevant materials and in the delivery of training.

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