



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 May 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008

New York, 30 June-25 July 2008

Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*

**Annual ministerial review: implementing the
internationally agreed goals and commitments in
regard to sustainable development**

Statement submitted by Help Handicapped International, an organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2008/100.



Statement

In support of the AMR theme for 2008 Help Handicapped International (HHI) would like to stress upon the significant role the disabled or rather the differently abled can play in sustainable development.

Disability covers the following fields:

Orthopedically handicapped (OH)

Hearing impaired (HI)

Visually impaired (VI)

Mentally retarded/impaired (MR) and

Multiple disabilities (MD)

As per WHO statistics 7 to 10% of the world's population is disabled.

This means that over 500 million people have no role to play in the sustainable development because they have no access to rehabilitative devices and hence are unable to realize the full potential of their minds and bodies.

80% of these disabled are from the developing countries and hence a concerted effort is called for in such areas, primarily in Asia and Africa.

Under the aegis of UNO-NGLS representatives from the developing countries of Asia and Africa should organize a conference on "How to tap the potential of the disabled and harness it for sustainable development".

A core committee should be formed to finalize a plan of action and how it should be implemented.

HHI with its background, experience and technical/managerial prowess would be willing to assume leadership of such a committee.

The first step would be to establish centres and/or organize camps for the fitting and distribution of assistive prosthetics and devices like:

(1) For the orthopedically handicapped (OH): Jaipur Foot for amputees, Callipers for the polio affected and Tricycles, Wheelchairs and Crutches based upon actual requirements.

Callipers: The campaign to achieve a polio free world through administering of pulse polio drops to children under 5 years of age has considerably reduced the incidence of polio in this age group. However, children/youth who are 5 to 25 years of age who are already polio affected need callipers to make them mobile. These have a useful life of 2 to 3 years because as the child grows callipers have to be replaced with the next bigger size. Such requirements in India alone are a staggering 20 million and there is a similar need in other countries too.

(2) For the hearing impaired (HI): Conducting of audiology tests and distribution of appropriate hearing aids.

(3) For the visually impaired (VI): Conducting of eye examination and fitting of prescription spectacles and conducting of cataract surgeries.

(4) For the mentally impaired (MR) and (5) multiple disabilities (MD): Creation of special need based facilities to realize the full potential of the beneficiaries.

For each field of disability it would be necessary to network with central and local governments of all countries, NGOs, social institutions, hospitals, day-care facilities and others.

A simultaneous exercise would be to impart vocational/micro-business training to the disabled coupled with micro-credit loans to assist them in adopting a suitable livelihood program attuned to their needs and abilities.

In each area best practices would have to be formulated based upon experiences, expert advice and availability of infrastructural facilities. A starting point could be a report circulated in 2004 on "Implementing Prosthetics & Orthotics Projects in Low-Income Countries"-A Framework For A Common Approach. This was the outcome of a meeting held in Geneva and subsequent inputs by 34 organizations, including HHI, based upon which the report was finalized in co-ordination with Landmine Survivors Network and The Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation.

These best practices would have to be circulated amongst all member countries who would then make some minor changes in tune with local needs and adopt the same.

The disabled, once they are rehabilitated and are economically independent with the livelihood program adopted by them can then contribute to sustainable development of their community and society in general.

Most of the developing countries have some similar schemes in existence but they are too few to achieve any major impact on sustainable development.

The need of the hour is for a collective and concerted effort by all concerned to formulate a strategy and action plan over a time frame to harness the mental and physical abilities of the differently abled and channel the same to achieve sustainable development.

Such an effort spread over a large geographical area with varying political, social and cultural conditions is feasible only under the UNO umbrella.
