

**Seventh Annual Meeting On The Role of the Asia Pacific Forum  
In the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights  
New Delhi, India, 11 – 13 November 2002**

**Oral Intervention of the Pre Forum NGO Consultation on  
Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities<sup>1</sup>**

The Pre-Forum NGO Consultation for the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions welcomes the submission of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission regarding the Proposed UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. It recognizes the participatory role national human rights institutions can take in the discussions of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee, and acknowledges the importance of the Recommendations submitted by the New Zealand Commission to this effect. The Pre-Forum NGO Consultation also acknowledges the appropriateness of focusing on regional approaches in light of the conclusion of the Asian Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons in October 2002 in Otsu, Japan. The Pre-Forum NGO Consultation would like to highlight the importance of Strategy 3 of the recent Draft Biwako Millennium Framework for Action, which addresses role national human rights institutions can play in the context of protecting the rights of disabled persons.

Over two thirds of the world's million disabled persons live in South or Southeast Asia. Although their rights are implicitly protected under several existing international human rights instruments, it is clear that disabled individuals still suffer from systematic discrimination at the institutional and social levels. National human rights institutions must acknowledge their role, both present and potential, in this appalling situation. The "barrier-free environment" that was so aptly referenced in the New Zealand Commission's background paper is far from being a reality. Asia Pacific human rights institutions, located at the nexus of human rights, public policy and governmental reform, must take advantage of their unique position to facilitate the integration of the rights of disabled persons into the human rights cultures of their respective states.

The Pre-Forum NGO Consultation offers nine recommendations aimed at strengthening the tie between the activities of national human rights institutions and the protection of the rights of disabled persons. These recommendations were developed in the context of the Paris Principles, the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, and UN and ESCAP Programs of Action. They encompass the following activities of national human rights: (1) ensuring that disabled persons are adequately represented in the composition of their institutions; (2) making themselves accessible to disabled persons in every way; (3) increasing awareness regarding the rights of disabled persons through information dissemination; (4)

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evaluating existing national legislation with an eye towards a rights based approach to disability; (5) using powers of litigation and friends of the court to protect the rights of disabled persons; (6) coordination of public education and awareness programs regarding the rights of disabled persons; (7) utilization of funds, specifically with regards to assuring that disabled persons are facilitated in their desire to participate in the activities of the Ad Hoc Committee; (8) using powers of investigation, reporting, and monitoring to actively pursue violations of the rights of often-marginalised disabled persons; and (9) coordination with non-governmental organizations.

All of these recommendations are vitally important if national human rights institutions are to become actively engaged in the protection of the rights of disabled persons. It is our desire to assure that these and all other future activities will be undertaken with the full and active participation of disabled persons.

I thank you for your kind attention.