

**PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES:  
TOWARDS A NEW UN CONVENTION**

**An International Workshop for National Human Rights Institutions from the  
Commonwealth and the Asia Pacific Region**

**New Delhi, India  
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**Closing remarks by**

**Mr. Orest Nowosad  
National Institutions Team Leader  
29 May 2003**

**Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

Justice Anand, Mrs. Uma Thuli, Mr. Runacres, Mrs. Nance,  
National Institutions friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Where has the time gone? It was only a short while ago when I was welcoming the cooperation which was evident in the organization of this International Workshop for National Human Rights Institutions from the Commonwealth and the Asia Pacific Region *Promoting the Rights of People with Disabilities: Towards a new UN Convention*. We've certainly covered a lot of ground since Monday evening.

This cooperation was demonstrated through the spirit with which all participants approached our work resulting in the declaration of today and recommendations to ensure that the rights of persons with disability are respected.

We did not only focus on an international human rights convention relating to the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities but we also explored how we can address the issue of the rights of persons with disabilities within our present work. This twin-track approach is one which national institutions have clearly embraced. We also placed front and centre that the rights of Persons with Disabilities is without ambiguity a human rights issue.

This work, and that relating to a Convention, will require cooperation with our partners in Government, Parliament, civil society and others to be successful. It has been recognized that you, along with organizations comprised of persons with disabilities, are the experts. In this regard you will be able to find your rightful place within the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. Indeed many are counting on your vigilance to ensure that the relevant issues are addressed.

I would like to again express my deep appreciation to Justice Anand, the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of India, and his colleagues who agreed to host this event; our friends at the British Council who worked so hard to bring this all together; our partners within the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions and the United Kingdom's Foreign Commonwealth Office for its contribution to this event.

I leave this workshop with many messages but the three that strike out the most are:

- We all have a right to be who we are;
- We must get beyond the disability and break down attitudinal barriers;  
and
- Listen to the voices, or learn the wishes and aspirations of, persons with disabilities – each and everyone of us could one day be a person with a disability and I am sure would like our voice to be heard, wish to be known, and our rights to be respected.

Thank you