

Special Event on
the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
[March 26, 2007]

STATEMENT BY INDIA

Mr. President,

We thank you for organising this Special Event, which is very timely particularly since the United Nations General Assembly would be holding later this week a Signing Ceremony of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

It gives us immense satisfaction for having been associated very closely with the processes leading to the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UN General Assembly. We are happy to see amidst us Ambassador Don MacKay who successfully steered the work of the Ad Hoc Committee that elaborated the Convention. We thank him for his leadership and commitment. We also commend the role of the International Disability Caucus throughout the process and for reinforcing the idea of 'nothing about us, without us'.

Mr. President,

India has long been committed to the elimination of specific barriers that persons with disabilities face. The Constitution of India implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all including persons with disabilities. The enactment of Persons with Disability Act in 1995 and subsequent legislative and institution-building measures paved the way for recognition and gradual realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. The National Policy for Disabled People of 2006 comprehensively spells out our goals towards full acknowledgement and exercise of all human rights of persons with disabilities as well as promoting a broad commitment to their accessibility, autonomy and equality of opportunities in the different spheres of activities. Apart from strengthening national level implementation mechanisms, we have already set in motion the process of amendment of the Persons with Disability Act of 1995 drawing on the lessons learnt so far. It is in this context, the adoption of the International Convention comes as timely for us. We look forward to signing the International Convention at an early date.

Mr. President,

The challenges ahead of us in the implementation of the Convention - at national, regional and international levels - are significant. In this context, the role of General Assembly and in particular the Human Rights Council remains paramount. An immediate task after the ratification of the Convention would be the establishment of the Treaty Body, and to decide on location of meeting of this body. While administrative mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention would be established by the States Parties to the Convention, there should be parallel efforts to mainstream disability rights within the UN system.

The HRC should serve as an effective forum for advocacy and awareness-raising of the rights of persons with disabilities and also for exchange of good practices in the implementation of disability rights. It should also effectively promote international cooperation particularly by encouraging States to facilitate and support capacity-building, technical and economic assistance programmes to developing countries with a view to assisting them in implementation of the Convention.

Mr. President,

India remains committed to ensure early realization of the rights of persons with disabilities. We look forward to hearing from other delegations on the contribution that the Human Rights Council can make towards this end.
