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Special Event on
the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

[June 06, 2008]

STATEMENT BY INDIA

Mr. President,

We thank you for organising this Special Event marking the entry into force of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The adoption and entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an important milestone in recognizing disabled persons as right holders and active members of society, rather than objects of charity. It gives us immense satisfaction ~~for~~^{at} having been associated very closely with this process all along. India is among the first countries to have signed and ratified the Convention.

Mr. President,

India has long been committed to the elimination of specific barriers that persons with disabilities face. As per India's 2001 census, there are about 22 million persons with disabilities in India, including those with visual, hearing speech, locomotor and mental disabilities. 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.

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 now is the establishment of the Treaty 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 working closely with all stakeholders particularly NGOs and civil society in our endeavours to realize the noble goals of the Convention.
