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January/February Newsletter: Meeting the Post-2015 Agenda

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Advancing the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities worldwide



Monthly Newsletter January/February 2016: Meeting the Post-2015 Agenda



Rehabilitation International Secretary-General Venus Ilagan appearing with Helen Hamlin of the International Federation on Ageing and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at CSocD54 on 8 February.

Disabilities at the 54th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD54)

During the first week of February, the UN was abuzz once again. Kicking off the season under the new 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, CSocD54 brought together civil society groups, country leaders and diplomats in “Rethinking and Strengthening Social Development in the Contemporary World.” Overall, the Commission focused its discussion on the critical role of social policy and development in achieving people-centered, inclusive, just, and socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development for all. However, breakout sessions included significant time on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the UN’s new agenda.

Rehabilitation International Secretary-General Venus Ilagan spent three days at the CSocD54 and was among those faces of civil society on the dais when UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on the contingent to “build on those successes” of lifting people out of extreme poverty, boosting food security; advancing universal primary education, promoting women’s empowerment, and reducing maternal and child mortality by “the full-inclusion of persons with disabilities”. Mr. Ban cited the increasing interest among decision makers for accessibility and the full inclusion of persons with disabilities – one billion of them who make up a large percentage of the

global population. “Too many people continue to face exclusion and are unable to realize their full potential,” he said to a packed Conference Room.

Earlier in the Conference, Ms. Ilagan spoke at a Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) panel on addressing the structural issues concerning inequalities faced by persons with disabilities in society and development. Tackling employment challenges among disabled person in her talk, Ms. Ilagan highlighted the many challenges disabled people face in accessing employment, saying that if earning an income marked an important requisite towards achieving some levels of independence for ordinary people, it mattered even more so for persons with disabilities. “If one earns an income and is managing his or her own finances, he or she can direct the course of his or her life and would enjoy better recognition and treatment from those in her family, community and society,” Ms. Ilagan said. She added that occupational segregation played a significant role in preventing persons with disabilities from productive employment in many developing countries is the practice of occupational segregation. “Studies show that occupation and industry play a large role in determining earnings for people with disabilities,” Ms. Ilagan added. “In many countries, PWDs are often relegated to occupations with lower wages, those that require lower education and training and lower skill levels – they also earn less compared to people without disabilities doing similar or exactly the same jobs.” She suggested, among other things, targeted recruitment, training and advancement opportunities of persons with disabilities; strong accommodations-related policies and practices; and a positive corporate culture, including in the level of top management.

“Disability presents a persistent disconnect between the individual characteristics affecting employment and the contextual qualities of work and the workplace. There is also the issue of overly significant underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in better paying jobs because of the pre-conceived notion that they do not have the capacity to perform certain types of jobs – often better and higher paying ones,” she concluded.

Prior to Ms. Ilagan’s presentation, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the Human Rights Council, gave a keynote address dovetailing with a panel on existing mechanisms and entities within the UN system that could contribute to mainstreaming disability and cooperation to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ms. Devandas-Aguilar said there now existed a common understanding that social policies inclusive of persons with disabilities were a “sound” investment in society – that their exclusion from decisions came with economic costs countries could no longer ignore, she said. “We have undoubtedly advanced,” she said, recalling that when the Millennium Development Goals were negotiated, “we were completely absent” from discussions, agendas, goals, indicators and processes.

Ms. Devandas-Aguilar proposed that States build social protection systems that reduced their poverty and facilitated participatory decision-making. She also suggested the Economic and Social Council create a permanent space for the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to update on activities to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

Read more about the [CSocD54](#), Ban Ki-moon's [remarks](#) and the [panels](#).



Preparations for the 9th session of the Conference of States Parties (COSP9) from June 14-16, 2016

Since its adoption in 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has stipulated that “the States Parties shall meet regularly in a conference” in order to consider any matter with regard to the implementation of the current Convention. Hosted by Ambassador Oh Joon of the Republic of Korea, Chair of the Bureau for the 9th COSP, the overarching theme for this year’s COSP is “Leaving no one behind” relative to the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the GA in September 2015. There will be three sub-themes to be decided by the Bureau.

Rehabilitation International recommended at a January planning meeting that all stakeholders (those with and without disabilities), who are actively engaged at different levels, must be given an equal opportunity to speak at the general debate (at COSP) to share highlights of their work and examples of good practice in realizing the objectives of the CRPD -- of which 161 countries are now party -- and the SDGs. RI has also suggested that State delegations to the COSP9 consider persons with

disabilities and their allies in the discussion to illustrate how they have helped achieve the visions of the CRPD at the national and regional levels ten years after its adoption.

The UN General Assembly has adopted a resolution spearheaded by the Republic of Korea and co-sponsored by 128 other States, to invest additional resources to make the United Nations fully inclusive of persons with disabilities and accessible to PWDs; the UN Secretary General will also make a report to the GA on the progress of its implementation. Realizing the importance of COSP9 as the CRPD marks its 10th year anniversary, the 1st Committee of the UN has approved provision of full conference services including the allocation of resources, to enable a 3-day COSP (instead of only 2 days as in previous years) which will include translation of the proceedings in the six UN languages. The Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities at COSP9 will hold an election of new members, and the Bureau will examine ways to include issues of migrants and refugees with disabilities in the discussion at COSP9.

Civil Society Day: A day prior to COSP, on 8 June, the Civil Society Forum (CSF) will take place. The CSF provides civil society representatives, organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs), development organisations, UN agencies, Member States, academics and researchers with a platform to share and discuss perspectives. More to come on this important event.

Read more on the upcoming [COSP9](#).

RI Presidential Visit: Rehabilitation International President Jans Mansbokken will visit New York during the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women from 14-18 March, using the opportunity to have several meetings with the RI staff, UN agencies and other important stakeholders. Please inform Adrian Brune at Rehabilitation International for more information or if you might like to meet with him: adrian.brune@riglobal.org

EC Meeting in Japan: From 9-10, the Rehabilitation International Executive Committee will meet in Tokyo, Japan to discuss issues relative to the future of RI and to finalize plans for the 23rd World Congress in Edinburgh. They will also meet from 22-24 October in Edinburgh, ahead of the World Congress.



NEWS TO USE:

Wheelmap: Wheelchairs, purpose-built cars, elevators and ramps allow people with mobile disabilities to plan their day within cities independently. Just one single step at an entrance or a broken elevator in a Metro can prove an insurmountable obstacle. This the point at which Wheelmap comes into play: users provide information for other users on the accessibility of destinations, while also spreading awareness of the problem to owners of wheelchair-inaccessible public places.

By going to www.wheelmap.org, people from all over the world can find or add destinations and rate them according to a traffic light system that accounts for ease of use. The map, available since 2010, currently includes more than 450,000 cafés, libraries, swimming pools and myriad public places with more than 300 new entries added on a daily basis. Users of Wheelmap can also download an Android or iPhone app and find their destinations in 22 different languages. Wheelmap was developed by Sozialhelden (Social Heros), a Berlin-based nonprofit organisation that has been creating projects to address social problems since 2004. [Sozialhelden](#)'s founder and chairman, Raúl Krauthausen, is an Ashoka-fellow, bearer of the Federal Order of Merit of Germany and user of a wheelchair.



Australian Cross Disability Alliance members, including Carolyn Frohmader (WWDA Executive Director) before a Australian Parliament hearing on institutionalized violence against disabled persons.

RI MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:

Women with Disabilities Australia (WWDA) Leads Way in Ending Institutional Abuse: Violence against people with disability in institutional and residential settings has been Australia's hidden shame, with the evidence of this national epidemic proving extensive and compelling. On 25 November 2015, the Australian Parliament could ignore it no longer, issuing a formal report with 30 recommendations, including sweeping changes to the regulation of disability workers and a call for a royal commission to investigate the issue. The Senate Inquiry into Violence and Abuse against People with Disability in Institutional and Residential Settings was chaired by Greens Senator Rachel Siewert, who said it was difficult to hear some of the accounts of abuse being told at the hearings. "No matter how prepared you think you are to hear these sorts of accounts, it always hits you. Always," she told national media.

With the help of the WWDA, ABC TV's Four Corners aired a news media investigation "In Our Care" that broke detailed allegations of long-term sexual assaults, physical and psychological abuse and neglect of people with disabilities, as well as the victimisation of whistleblowers. WWDA and its fellow disabled persons organisations around the country then played a key role in fostering a story from a daily news item into lasting change. From drafting the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry to encouraging members to personally write every senator and encourage them to vote in favour of action on the issue, WWDA doggedly pursued justice for its members. Next up, helping enact the reforms. "We want access to justice. We also want, as a matter of urgency, a national statutory authority to actually oversee and

regulate and monitor and make sure that there is an independent oversight mechanism nationally,” said Executive Director, Carolyn Frohmader. “Fundamentally what we need is for resources to be directed toward people with disability themselves; to capacity building so that people with disability can learn about what constitutes violence, can understand that what is happening to them is wrong, to learn that it’s a crime.”

Read more on the [Senate Inquiry and outcome](#).

United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD) Rebuilds After Fight Over CRPD Ratification:

Although many members of USCID spent a great deal of time in 2013 and 2014 trying to secure the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Senate, the legislative body nonetheless declined to ratify the treaty in 2015 under a mounting challenge by right-wing groups who say it threatens U.S. sovereignty. Citing a choice “to let politics, lies and misinformation rule the day,” the USICD has aimed in 2016 to rebuild under new leadership through the upcoming election. “Because the composition of the Senate has changed and Republicans are now in charge, we have an opportunity to build new relationships and find new partners,” said Patricia Morrissey, the new USICD President.

On the agenda for the upcoming year, besides the election, USICD plans to continue its role as an implementing partner in supporting cross-disability coalition building in Myanmar with USAID and World Learning. USICD Executive Director David Morrissey visited the country in April 2015 to meet DPO leaders and provide a training on disability advocacy. USICD will also foster its new partnership with the U.S. Business Leadership Network (USBLN) to conduct a roundtable on including people with disabilities in international business in the workforce and in the marketplace. U.S. companies are embracing the global expansion of disability rights, and they have experience to share and much to gain from USICD’s global vision for access, inclusion and equality, Morrissey said.

With that in mind, the organization has not given up on CRPD ratification. Inspired by U.S. leadership in recognizing the rights of people with disabilities through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the CRPD echoes its values of independence and respect and the concept of reasonable accommodation, according to Morrissey. “How people with disabilities are treated in a country is a solid measure for judging a country’s approach to human rights generally. If a person with the disability has the same opportunities... chances are the human rights record of a country is on solid footing. The efforts we made are valuable and need to be sustained,” she reminded members.

Read more about USICD’s [plan for 2016](#).



2016 NGO CSW Forum Women of Distinction awardee, Amina J. Mohammed, who served as a Special Adviser on “Post-2015 Development Planning” to the United Nation’s Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

AWARDS/FELLOWSHIPS:

Call for nominations for the 2016 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize:

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), in partnership with the Vaclav Havel Library and the Charta 77 Foundation, has issued a call for nominations for the 2016 [Václav Havel Human Rights Prize](#), which will be awarded for the fourth consecutive year on 10 October next in Strasbourg. The Prize aims to reward outstanding civil society action in defending human rights in Europe and beyond. Candidates should have made a real difference to the human rights situation of a given group, been instrumental in uncovering systemic violations on a large scale, or have successfully mobilised public opinion or the international community for a given cause.

“This prize honours all those who stand up for human dignity and fundamental freedoms, speak out against the abuse of democratic standards, and spare no effort to help those whose rights are violated,” said PACE President Anne Brasseur. The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize consists of a sum of €60,000, a trophy and a diploma. The deadline for submitting nominations is 30 April 2016. Nominations should be sent to the Parliamentary Assembly by e-mail to the following address: hrprize.pace@coe.int, using the form available on the Prize website. They

should be signed by at least five sponsors.

Women’s World Summit Foundation’s call for 2016 nominations for the annual “Prize for Women’s Creativity in Rural Life”: Awarded since 1994, the “Prize for Creativity (US\$1000 per laureate) honors women and women’s groups around the world exhibiting exceptional creativity, courage and commitment for the improvement of the quality of life in rural communities The Prize aims to draw international attention to laureates’ contributions to sustainable development, food security and peace, thus generating recognition and support for their initiatives and projects.

Nominees should be women and women’s groups currently active in rural life whose efforts have not yet been acknowledged by other awards. They may not nominate themselves. Nominations must include the following items:

- Original signed letter of nomination indicating how the nominator knows the nominee and for how long.
 - Biographical data on the nominee (full name, age, education, place of work, background) and a detailed history of the nominee’s creative project (written by the nominator) including her motivation, innovative aspects, any obstacles overcome, and the impact in the community.
- At least two original and signed endorsement letters from organizations or individuals other than the nominator and, if possible, additional supporting materials such as newspaper articles or publications.
- A few labelled photographs clearly showing the candidate for possible publication

Nomination materials should arrive no later than 30 April through the post only.

Download the the [nomination form in Pdf format](#) or find more information on the WWDF [website](#).

Woman of Distinction Awardee: The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY), one of the Regional Committees of CoNGO that advocates for women’s rights and gender equality, announced the 2016 NGO CSW Forum Women of Distinction awardee, Amina J. Mohammed on 4 February.

Prior to her appointment as the Minister of the Environment by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in November 2015, Ms. Mohammed served as Special Adviser on “Post-2015 Development Planning” to the United Nation’s Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. She is also the CEO/Founder of the Center for Development Policy Solutions, a think tank established to address the policy and knowledge gaps within the Government of Nigeria, Parliament and the private sector in development and civil society.

The annual Woman of Distinction award is given to a woman or women in recognition of her leadership in the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment. The honoree is a leading activist from a developing country who can address the theme of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#), will benefit from participation in Consultation Day, and make a difference when she returns home.

Read more about the [NGO CSW/NY](#) and the [Woman of Distinction Award](#).



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Designed to build on RI's achievements to promote accessibility and inclusion across countries, a thousands of the world's leading disability researchers, advocates, government agencies, politicians and practitioners will attend the 23rd RI World Congress. Held every four years, RI creates practical solutions through inspirational projects and programmes. The Congress offers a unique opportunity to build a stronger international coalition to help eradicate socioeconomic barriers, promote independence and facilitate an open dialogue between world leaders to improve the lives of people with disabilities. [Book your accommodation today](#) and save ten percent on the fee. Read more about the 2016 [RI World Congress](#).



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