

Conference on a new UN Convention concerning the rights of persons with disabilities

The meeting:

From March 21st to 24th CIL participated at the Non-EU South Eastern Europe Consultative Meeting on a Draft Comprehensive Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities held in Belgrade.

The sharing of ideas and experiences at the regional level is intended to integrate the perspective from the region into the Convention negotiation process currently taking place in New York. The meeting was specifically intended to produce an outcome document on the views and priorities of the region, to be officially transmitted to the Ad Hoc Committee at its 8th session in August 2006.

The consultative meeting was in keeping with the past consultations that were held in Asia, Western and Southern Africa, Latin America and the Arab region. The meeting aimed at supporting a consultation on the draft Convention by disability stakeholders from the following seven countries: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro- at the governmental as well as non-governmental level.

The United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs – DESA – in its capacity of substantive secretariat of the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly charged with the elaboration of the Convention and on the basis of its previous experience in regional and sub-regional consultative meetings on the Convention was responsible for the coordination and facilitation of the substance of the meeting.

The meeting had two primary objectives:

- 1) Sharing of information on the on-going negotiation process, that is to say, the content of the draft Convention, its critical issues and the debate around them.
- 2) Favouring a dialogue among regional stakeholders in order to define the region's priorities with respect to the future Convention.

The Ad Hoc Committee responsible for the consultation stated, that although the disabled people organisations' movement in South Eastern Europe is quite dynamic, clear expectations, actions and coordination remain at a level of uncertainty. In that perspective, an enhanced dialogue among disabled people organisation is of prime importance and even more between governments and disabled people organisations. Most governments of the region have been involved in this dynamic led by disabled people organisations, but if these latter still lack clarity on the subject, so do the respective governments to whom national priorities remain elsewhere.

CIL rests sceptical about the practice of such consultations and the expected results. Generally speaking, the text of the Convention is rather toothless and the impact it will have on the Bulgarian government might rest limited.

The outcome document established during the conference by a designated group of participants can be consulted [here](#). (make link to document)

To get some background information about the UN convention, look at the article below and visit the website that was created to inform about its process.

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable>

The Ad Hoc committee invites DPOs to promote and support the Convention, using for instance the following tactics:

- 1) Discuss it at national and regional level, build consensus
- 2) Launch strategic thinking and planning initiatives to prepare public opinion and governments for implementation after signature and ratification
- 3) Organise talks, lectures and seminars to inform / educate people about the content of the Convention
- 4) Share your experience and activities with others by sending it to enable@un.org to be included in the convention website.

The Convention, in general:

As stated in Article n° 1 of the Convention, the purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Starting from the Mexican proposal for a new convention, endorsed in the United Nation's General Assembly, an Ad Hoc Committee was created in December 2001 to work on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, based on the holistic approach adopted in the fields of social development, human rights and non-discrimination.

The seventh session of the Ad Hoc Committee in January-February 2006 concluded a second full reading of the draft that you can find under the following link:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/ahc7ann2rep.htm> is the working text of the convention at the current stage.

The eighth Session, to be held in August 2006, will review the full draft completed in February, all the consultative meetings will be concluded and the regional priorities held into consideration. The process of elaboration of the Convention is expected to be completed by end 2006 and will be open for signatures after the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and thus for the ratification by the parliaments of the signatory states.

To find out more about the UN and disabilities, visit the website:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable>