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NORDIC STATEMENT - SPECIAL EVENT ON DISABILITIES (Kirsti Pohjankukka, Finland)

26.3.2007

Thank you Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic Countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Mr. President,

I wish to thank the distinguished speakers of today's special event for their most useful contributions.

The full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women, men and children with disabilities is an issue of non-discrimination; and it is a matter of fulfilling the intention of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The promotion and the protection of the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, is a main priority for the Nordic countries.

Therefore, the Nordic countries have contributed actively to reach this aim and it was with joy that we joined the consensus in adopting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Creating a new Convention takes a lot of hard work. The Nordic Countries would like to thank especially Ambassador Don McKay, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, whose able leadership ensured an open, transparent, inclusive and successful drafting process.

Without the engagement and expertise of the non-governmental organizations of persons with disabilities, we would not now have a Convention with such a broad support and so firmly based in experience, as this Convention. The continued engagement of persons with disabilities will be essential for the process of implementation, and we hope that the speakers of today's event can further address the issue of how this involvement can be guaranteed in the future.

All of the international human rights conventions apply to all individuals. However, it is this Convention that adapts the human rights obligations of states to fit with the situation of persons with disabilities, i.a. through the concept of reasonable accommodation. Hopefully this will make it an effective instrument for the practical implementation of the human rights of persons with disabilities. The work with improving accessibility is high on the agenda in the Nordic countries. In reference to the practical implementation of the Convention, we would seek to hear views of the speakers on how they envisage the role of ombudsmen or corresponding national monitoring systems?

The five Nordic countries will be among the countries signing the Convention at the ceremony in New York on 30 March, and we strongly encourage others to do the same. We hope that the ratification and effective implementation of the Convention will lead to the empowerment of persons with disabilities and a change of attitudes in society.

Thank you, Mr. President