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General Debate

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Chargé d'affaires
Minister Councillor

Mr. Chair,

Norway ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 3 June 2013. We consider the Convention to be an important tool both in promoting human rights and sustainable development.

The Norwegian Government has recently presented a parliamentary white paper on UN which also pledges that Norway will include persons with disabilities in all multilateral efforts where relevant. A recently launched white paper on Norway’s development policy further stresses this point, and underlines that efforts for the rights of persons with disabilities will be prioritized within the focus areas of Norwegian development cooperation such as education, health, gender equality and humanitarian assistance.

(Check against delivery)
In addition, the Norwegian Government has developed guidelines for “Norway’s International Efforts for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”. We are also pleased to announce that Norway has contributed with 500,000 US dollars to the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD).

The UN Secretary General has repeatedly pointed to the invisibility of persons with disabilities in national and international policies and programs. We are therefore pleased to observe that disability is increasingly included in several UN resolutions and documents and in particular the references to disability in the outcome document from RIO+20. We cannot pursue sustainable development without the meaningful involvement and active participation of persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, a universal social protection floor is vital, and access to health services, education and employment for all is fundamental in order to make it possible for all, including persons with disabilities, to live an independent life and participate in society on an equal basis.

Persons with disabilities are often among the poorest of the poor, experiencing difficult living conditions or unfulfilled rights. Empowering strategies and visualization become of vital importance in order to secure a society for all, including equal participation in development. From a democratic point of view, it is equally important to encourage political participation at all levels and decision-making.

Women and girls with disabilities often suffer from double discrimination, and are at a higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence and other forms of abuse. Therefore, activities targeting women and girls must also include women and girls with disabilities. It is our objective to improve our understanding of multidimensional discrimination, and this aspect is particularly emphasized in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ new plan of action for gender equality.

Ensuring the protection of persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergencies, including both natural disasters and conflict and post-conflict situations, is of essence. The Mine Ban Convention from 1997 as well as the Convention on Cluster Munitions from 2008 provide obligations for States Parties to provide assistance to survivors of these weapons. As the current President of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Norway would like to emphasize the importance of including victims of cluster munitions, of other explosive remnants of war,
of landmines and of armed violence in general in programs and activities promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.

The international community has started consultations on the development agenda post-2015. We are looking forward to the upcoming High Level meeting “The way forward: a disability inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond”. Norway shares the objective that the outcome should be a precise and action-oriented document which will make a genuine impact.

Finally, we must ensure that the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are given due consideration in the discussions on the development agenda post-2015. As a part of a human rights based approach, we see it as especially important to secure inclusion of persons with disabilities in programs aimed at health care, education, female empowerment, humanitarian assistance and democratic participation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.