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Disability in Development.**

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Mr. Chair

The Norwegian policy on disability is fully concurrent with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, CRPD. We believe in mainstreaming equality for persons with disabilities in the legislation, in the public, economic and social life. To comply fully with the CRPD, the Parliament has passed a new Act on Legal Competence and Guardianship. Norway was among the first to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and we expect to ratify as soon as the Act enters into force.

In the last 50 years persons with disabilities have been gradually integrated into the Norwegian society. Reforms like compulsory primary education for all children up to 10th grade and replacing institutional care with inclusion and homecare have been important milestones.

On the 1st of January 2009 a new Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility act entered into force in Norway. The Act prohibits discrimination on grounds of disability. It applies in all areas of society, i.e. in the labour market, housing, goods and services. The vision is that Norway will be universally designed by 2025.

The eight millennium goals are all essential for persons with disabilities. In fact, none of the goals can be reached without including disabled people. Even so, the Secretary General's report on realizing the MDG's (A/65/173), draw the conclusion that the policies and programmes have not specifically included persons with disability. He calls for action to do so in within each country and in international cooperation.

The MDGs aim at achieving universal primary school for all children by 2015. We know that approximately 1/3 of the children in the world who do not attend school, are children with disabilities. These are frightening facts. If nothing is done now, disabled people will remain illiterate, excluded from the labour market and poor at least one more generation. We must ask ourselves, why do we accept that children with disabilities are treated this way? Children with disabilities have the same rights and inherent dignity as everyone. The Fast Track Initiative to achieve universal primary school must secure the inclusion of children with disabilities.

We find the same pattern when it comes to health services, child mortality and reproductive health. Persons who are blind, deaf or intellectual impaired often find information on sexual and reproductive health inaccessible to them. Mobility impaired people often do not have access to the services.

The MDG's article 8 and article 32 in CRPD both calls upon international cooperation. Some years ago Norway adopted a policy to mainstream disability in international cooperation.

To fulfil the MDG's disability must be mainstreamed in all development programs. The responsibility to include disability and achieve good results lies firstly within each country, next with all parties in the cooperation.

One important way of securing the inclusion of persons with disabilities is by closely consulting and actively involving persons with disabilities through their organisations in all planning and implementation of programs.

In remembering that disability is not a tragedy, but a normal part of life, I thank you for the attention.