**FNs generalforsamling 3. komité – utkast til barneinnlegget fra BLD, 30.9.11.**

Madame/Mr. Chair

Norway appreciates the report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with a special focus on children with disabilities. We also welcome the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary – General on Violence against Children, including her spotlight on children with disabilities. Although the reports states that there is very little data available on disability, there are some important facts we must realize and act upon.

The report refers to a UNICEF survey, indicating that between 14 and 35 per cent of children screened positively on disability in a large majority of countries. The study was based on available household data, which probably did not count children living in residential institutions or on the streets. In some countries this will make the figures even higher. Knowing these figures, girls and boys with disabilities can no longer remain invisible, neither in national plans nor in international cooperation.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, reinforced in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, asserts the rights of every girl and every boy to have access to education. Education is the means for inclusion in society and for earning a living as an adult. It is important with an accessible and inclusive school that provides education for everyone, independent of disability or chronic disease. Girls and boys with disabilities have had the right to an inclusive primary education in Norway since 1975. There is *compulsory* primary school from grade one to grade ten, and all youth, including youth with disabilities have the *right* to upper secondary education.

The findings in the present report tell us that out of 100 million girls and boys with disabilities under 5 years of age, 80 per cent live in developing countries, where the provision of primary education tends to be insufficient. Unless Governmental policies and international development cooperation include girls and boys and young women and men with disabilities in their plans, there will be another generation of persons with disabilities who will remain excluded from society, and the millennium goal on education will not be reached.

We therefore warmly welcome the suggestion to promote strategies for inclusive education and to include in all reports on children’s education, disintegrated data relating to girls and boys with disabilities, in order to make children with disabilities visible and to detect gender based differences and measure progress in this field.

Both girls and boys and young women and men with disabilities have the right to be heard and to participate in democratic processes in community life. Their voices are crucial in the society’s understanding of their situation and their needs.

Madame/Mr. Chair

Throughout the world girls and boys with disabilities face superstition, stigma and negative attitudes. There is also lack of knowledge among professionals as to the *abilities* of girls and boys with disabilities. This makes it possible for societies to treat girls and boys with disabilities in inhuman ways and ignore their rights. According to the report (A/66/230) there is still a widespread use of residential institutions for children with disabilities in some regions. Institutions will often exclude the children from natural participation in the society, and moreover, they may constitute inhuman and cruel treatment. The children may suffer from intentionally lack of medical treatment which sometimes causes their death. The report (A/66/230) refers to a UN study on Violence against children which expresses deep concern relating to violence, neglect and dangerous environments

Chair, in 1991 Norway decided to close down the residential institutions for persons with disabilities, including for children. Reports had shown that in many of the institutions, the persons with disabilities were not well treated; in fact many of them were abused. We believe that children with disabilities should live with their families, they should be included in their societies, in education, in sports and social life; otherwise they will remain excluded as adults. In order to secure inclusion and good services, the Norwegian government will soon launch a renewed strategy for girls and boys with disabilities and their families.

Madame/Mr. Chair

We also have before us the Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children. (A/66/277) She reports that “the lives of children with disabilities are fraught with stigma, discrimination, cultural prejudice, misperception and invisibility”. They face an alarming high risk for physical as well as emotional violence. They are more likely not to gain access to schooling nor remain in schools. Tackling violence against children in schools - including children with disabilities was highlighted at the Oslo consultation in June 2011. This expert meeting was organized in cooperation with the Special Representative, Council of Europe and the Government of Norway. We were pleased to host this meeting!

To tackle violence, the meeting emphasized the need to see children’s situation in the school system in conjunction with their situation at home and in the society as such. Violence of any form in one of these arenas will have great impact on the child’s situation in other arenas. As stated in the report, children with disabilities are more vulnerable and at a greater risk to endure different forms of violence. They are also less able to report violence than other children. We must also realize the fact that as youngsters they are more exposed to sexual violence, not least the young girls with disabilities. It is therefore urgent that we understand and attend to their situation and needs, and prevent violence and protect their rights.