



អង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិ

ការិយាល័យនៃឧត្តមស្នងការអន្តរជាតិបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



CHECK BY DELIVERY

**National Awareness-raising Workshop on the
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol**

Thursday, 13 March 2008

**Welcoming remarks on behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization and the United Nations
Children's Fund**

Mr. Christophe Peschoux, OHCHR Representative

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be able to make some opening remarks on the behalf of the United Nations partners—the High Commissioner's Office, ILO and UNICEF—to welcome participants to this national awareness-raising workshop organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs, together with the Disability Action Council, the National Centre for Disabled Persons and the Cambodian Disabled Persons Organization.

We at the United Nations very much welcomed the signing, by the Foreign Minister, Excellency Hor Namhong, on 1 October in New York, of the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Convention, which was adopted by the General Assembly at the end of 2006, is the first new human rights treaty of the twenty-first century. It does not create new rights, since persons with disabilities are already entitled to all human rights like any other person. Instead, the Convention sets out the special steps required to ensure that disabled people are able to enjoy their rights as human beings *on an equal basis* with able-bodied people.

Cambodia has more than its fair share of people living with disabilities, whether as a result of disease and poor medical care, accidents or the tragic legacy of the years of war. Landmines continue even now to kill and maim, sixteen years after the peace was signed. Road traffic accidents create yet more victims on a daily basis.

By signing the Convention, the Royal Government has demonstrated once again its commitment to promoting the rights of the disabled. Cambodia was one of the first countries to sign and then ratify the 1997 *Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use*,

Stockpiling, Production and Transfer or Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. It is also a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which contains specific provisions on children with disabilities. Indeed, Cambodia has a good record on accepting international human rights standards, having ratified six of the core human rights treaties, as well as numerous ILO Conventions. The United Nations hopes that Cambodia will be amongst the first countries to ratify this latest treaty, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Signing the Convention is only the first step on the road to full ratification: the process by which an international treaty becomes legally-binding. Before this can happen, a national law must be passed. A draft national law on the rights of disabled persons is been under consideration for many years and is now in the final stages of adoption. We very much hope to see this law enter into force in the near future, in conjunction with the formal ratification of the Convention.

The new Convention sets a high international standard, a goal towards which the Government must seek to make sustained progress in the years to come. In contrast, the national law on disability provides a set of more immediately-realizable goals, taking into account the situation of Cambodia today.

Signing and ratifying treaties are important demonstrations of a government's commitment to a particular issue; but a more important demonstration is found in a government's actions. Ratification of the Convention must be followed by serious efforts by the Royal Government to implement its provisions progressively in order to bring about a sustained improvement in the protection of the rights of disabled people in Cambodia.

Addressing the needs of people with disability is an important component of Cambodia's national development effort. No country can fully develop if a segment of its population is left behind. Cambodia needs to nurture the talents of *all* of its citizens. In this regard, whilst this workshop is principally about the new UN Convention, I would like to take this opportunity to call also for Cambodia to ratify the 1983 ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), No. 159). Persons with disabilities face disproportionate poverty, exacerbated by restricted access to training, employment and livelihood opportunities. Convention No. 159 can help to overcome these barriers.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

To date, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been signed by 125 countries and 17 countries have already become full States parties. The Convention will enter into force in international law when 20 states have ratified it.

There is still time for Cambodia to be amongst those first twenty states.

Thank you.