

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Amnesty International welcomes adoption of major new international treaty to protect rights of persons with disabilities

Amnesty International warmly welcomes the UN General Assembly's adoption by consensus today of a new core human rights treaty to better promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Once in force after the required number of 20 UN Member States have ratified it, the new Convention will be a key tool to assist millions of people with disabilities in achieving recognition of their dignity and the effective protection of their human rights.

The new International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was swiftly adopted in five years and is the product of virtually unique collaboration between states, persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations, and the UN. The new convention addresses discrimination suffered by millions of persons with disabilities around the world, by expressly prohibiting discrimination in education, employment, health, access to information and public facilities. The convention outlines specific steps needed to make the rights of persons with disabilities a reality. It recognizes the special needs of the most vulnerable: children with disabilities, and focusses on women with disabilities, who often suffer multiple discrimination. Of particular importance is the establishment of a committee of experts that includes persons with disabilities - the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - to monitor implementation of the Convention by States Parties.

Amnesty International pays tribute to the many people with disabilities and their representative organizations who provided leadership in negotiations to ensure that a strong treaty was adopted that effectively addresses their needs. Amnesty International also expresses its appreciation to the many government representatives who have effectively and speedily cooperated in making the adoption of this new human rights treaty a reality. The effective cooperation between states and civil society in drafting this strong text should serve as an example for any human rights standard setting exercise.

Amnesty International calls on all UN Member States to ratify the new Convention as soon as possible so that the rights enshrined in it will soon become a reality for all persons with disabilities throughout the world.

Also adopted today was an Optional Protocol that would allow State Parties to recognize the competence of the Convention's Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals who claim to be victims of violations of provisions of the Convention. Amnesty International urges all states that become States Parties to the Convention also to ratify this Optional Protocol as a matter of priority.