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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DISABLED PERSONS

Report of the Secretary-General

III. Possibilities of continuing the activities of the International Institute for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries 1/

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 9 of its resolution 34/154, requested the Secretary-General to explore the possibilities of continuing the activities of the International Institute for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries and to submit a report in that respect to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. The International Institute for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries was begun as a project document signed in September 1976 between the Government of Iran and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and was envisioned as an autonomous body jointly supported by the Government of Iran, other Governments, the United Nations, UNDP, the specialized agencies concerned (International Labour Organisation, World Health Organization, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and a non-governmental organization (Rehabilitation International). The project was ended in April 1979.

3. The long-term objective of the Institute was to provide assistance to developing countries in the establishment of services for disability prevention and rehabilitation aimed at covering the maximum number of disabled persons at the lowest possible cost. The Institute had the following functions:

(a) To develop an information system capable of providing information about disability prevention and social integration and rehabilitation of disabled persons;

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1/ For sects. I (Introduction) and II (Work of the Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons) and the annex (report of the Advisory Committee), see A/35/444. For sect. IV (Implementation of other provisions of General Assembly resolution 34/154), see A/35/444/Add.2.

(b) To develop the capacity for research and studies into disability problems, their prevention and solution;

(c) To develop and promote alternative models;

(d) To provide advisory services in order to promote and support national rehabilitation programmes;

(e) To provide personnel training courses;

(f) To promote co-operation between countries and the exchange of national experience;

(g) To develop mechanisms for close co-operation and co-ordination with existing or planned activities of the United Nations and the specialized agencies concerned and with other organizations in order to avoid duplication and fully utilize available resources and expertise;

(h) To seek and receive funds.

4. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 34/154, possibilities have been explored of ways to continue the activities of the Institute. Other approaches for meeting the needs of developing countries for the kind of services envisaged for the former Institute have also been considered.

5. At the interagency meeting on preparations for the International Year of Disabled Persons, held at Geneva from 9 to 11 June 1980, the agencies involved in the establishment of the International Institute for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries were represented, with a view to making comments and suggestions concerning the future activities of such an institute. The interagency group thought that the revival or launching of a new international institute should be an integral part of the Plan of Action for the International Year of Disabled Persons and that, in addition to the agencies' opinion, both the Advisory Committee on the Year and the international symposium on co-operation among developing countries should give their thoughts on the nature of the activities to be undertaken by such an institute, taking into account the priorities and most urgent fields of activities identified by the developing countries.

6. Certain participants felt that such an institute should not be re-established in view of the many difficulties arising from the diversity of situations and also the difficulties of running an international institute in several working languages. Instead, funds should be allocated to already existing institutions at the level of the regional commissions to reinforce their programmes of disability prevention and treatment. Some participants suggested that a subregional approach to establishing new institutes ought to be examined and that the possibilities of financing such institutes by interested Governments, United Nations organizations and other financing bodies should be explored.

7. Other participants in the group thought that there need not necessarily be a contradiction between the existence of regional institutes and that of an

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international institute. The International Year of Disabled Persons could be a unique opportunity to create a focal point at the international level in order to avoid duplication and provide a centre for the co-ordination of research activities, studies, training and technical assistance services in the fields of disability prevention and rehabilitation.

8. The Advisory Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, at its second session, held at Vienna from 20 to 29 August 1980, discussed the problems concerning the International Institute for Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries. Diverse opinions were expressed on the advisability of having one international institute or regional institutes attached to the regional commissions. The possibility of allocating the funds to existing bodies was also discussed.

9. The Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should consider the possibility of launching an International Institute for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons in Developing Countries with a view to assisting Governments in developing countries to integrate disabled persons into the over-all social development process; this institute should become the nucleus of similar institutes established on a regional basis to meet special indigenous and local needs, and eventually to promote a network of self-help agencies around the world.

10. The Committee further recommended to the General Assembly:

(a) To invite UNDP and other funding organizations to consider favourably any request which may be addressed to them by Governments for the funding of this institute or institutes and also to encourage funding by special voluntary contributions;

(b) To invite Member States to encourage the close co-operation with the specialized agencies of the United Nations concerned with human welfare and development in setting up the institutes, and also to encourage the use of the resources of the relevant non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

11. As the recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be considered by the General Assembly at its current session, the Secretary-General will await the guidance of the Assembly on further steps that might be taken concerning an international institute for the rehabilitation of disabled persons in developing countries.

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