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Statement submitted by the World Council for the Welfare of
the Blind, a non-governmental organization in category II
consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 23 and 24 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1296 (XLIV).

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The World Council for the Welfare of the Blind calls the Council's attention
to the "Declaration of Rights of Deaf-Blind Persons", adopted by the Helen Keller
World Conference on Services to Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults on 16 September 1977.
The Declaration reads as follows:

Preamble

Delegates from 30 countries around the world assembled for this first
international conference on services to deaf-blind youths and adults, welcoming
the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations
Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, have agreed upon and have adopted
the following Declaration specifically concerning the needs and rights of
deaf-blind persons and commend it to the attention of the world community:

Article 1

Every deaf-blind person is entitled to enjoy the universal rights that are
guaranteed to all people by the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the
rights provided for all disabled persons by the Declaration on the Rights of
Disabled Persons.

Article 2

Deaf-blind persons have the right to expect that their capabilities and their aspirations to lead a normal life within the community and their ability to do so shall be recognized and respected by all Governments, administrators, educational and rehabilitation personnel and the general public.

Article 3

Deaf-blind persons have the right to receive the best possible medical treatment and care for the restoration of sight and hearing and the services required to utilize remaining sight and hearing, including the provision of the most effective optical and hearing aids, speech training, when appropriate, and other forms of rehabilitation intended to secure maximum independence.

Article 4

Deaf-blind persons have the right to economic security to ensure a satisfactory standard of living and the right to secure work commensurate with their capabilities and abilities or to engage in other meaningful tasks, for which the requisite education and training shall be provided.

Article 5

Deaf-blind persons shall have the right to lead an independent life as an integrated member of the family and community, including the right to live on their own or to marry and raise a family. Where a deaf-blind person lives within a family, greatest possible support shall be provided to the whole family unit by the appropriate authorities. If institutional care is advisable, it shall be provided in surroundings and under such conditions that it resembles normal life as closely as possible.

Article 6

Deaf-blind persons shall have the right, and at no cost, to the services of an interpreter with whom they can communicate effectively to maintain contact with others and with the environment.

Article 7

Deaf-blind persons shall have the right to current news, information, reading matter and educational material in a medium and form which they can assimilate. Technical devices that could serve to this end shall be provided and research in this area shall be encouraged.

Article 8

Deaf-blind persons shall have the right to engage in leisure-time recreational activities, which shall be provided for their benefit, and the right and opportunity to organize their own clubs or associations for self-improvement and social betterment.

Article 9

Deaf-blind persons shall have the right to be consulted on all matters of direct concern to them and to legal advice and protection against improper abridgement of their rights due to their disabilities.

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For purposes of implementation of the DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF DEAF-BLIND PERSONS, the definition of deaf-blind persons adopted by the Helen Keller World Conference on Services to Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults is as follows:

"Persons who have substantial visual and hearing losses such that the combination of the two causes extreme difficulty in pursuit of educational, vocational, avocational, or social skills."
