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High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Statement submitted by Christian Blind Mission, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2012/100.



Statement

Christian Blind Mission is an international disability and development organization working to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the most disadvantaged communities of the world.

The purpose of the present statement is to highlight that initiatives promoting productive capacity, employment and decent work initiatives must include and empower persons with disabilities if they are to be effective in eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

There are over 1 billion people with disabilities in the world and over 80 per cent of these people live in developing countries. People with disabilities are disproportionately subjected to poverty, with over 20 per cent of the poorest of the world's poor having a disability.

Disability and poverty are strongly linked through many factors, the most significant for the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council being that people with disabilities are frequently excluded from education, vocational training and employment, participation in the marketplace and loan opportunities. This occurs because societies often stigmatize disability, do not realize the many capabilities of people with disabilities and/or do not consider how mainstream services such as schools or workplaces are inaccessible to people with disabilities.

This exclusion of people with disabilities from livelihood activities and productive capacity development obstructs poverty eradication and sustainable and equitable economic growth on several levels:

- People with disabilities and their families are placed at higher risk of poverty. Even where people with disabilities are employed, they commonly earn less than their counterparts without disabilities. Women with disabilities also commonly earn less than men with disabilities
- Families are also disadvantaged where poor community support for people with disabilities means that relatives (often women and girls) must forego schooling or paid employment in order to provide care to family members with disabilities
- Communities are denied the contributions that people with disabilities would make if they were strong economic participants. On an international scale, it is estimated that 5.36 per cent to 6.97 per cent of gross national product is lost annually through the exclusion of people with disabilities and their carers from the workforce. This impedes the economic growth of communities and undermines development initiatives
- Communities that exclude people with disabilities are also not sustainable. Communities that develop processes to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in economic and social activities are more sustainable and equitable as they significantly reduce the number of their members who are unable to meet their own needs

The organization and its partners strongly recommend to the 2012 high-level segment the following:

(a) Any ministerial declaration should address the particular importance of including people with disabilities in all poverty eradication and economic growth initiatives;

(b) The Council should develop a special task force to devise and oversee new initiatives to promote productive capacity, employment and decent work for people with disabilities in developing countries;

(c) Employment-related goals and commitments set by the Council should include specific targets and indicators around the inclusion of people with disabilities in employment and decent work.
