



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
11 April 2012

Original: English

---

### Substantive session of 2012

New York, 2-27 July 2012

**High-level segment: annual ministerial review**

### **Statement submitted by Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, 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.



## Statement

The Economic and Social Council has clearly identified and articulated that “Decent work and promoting productive capacity are central to poverty eradication, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and equitable, inclusive and sustainable development”. This statement is especially true for persons with disabilities, who are among the poorest of the poor around the world in both developed and developing countries. There are many capable persons with a variety of disabilities who can be contributing members of their community, working and living independently, and as providers for their families.

Although providing on-the-job accommodation and access to the built environment is extremely important for office employment, this does not solve many of the issues related to lack of access and opportunity for employment for persons with disabilities. It must not be assumed that “white collar” office or “desk” jobs are the only suitable forms of employment. For many persons with a disability, especially in developing countries, lack of gainful employment is preceded by a lack of access to education and adequate health care throughout their formative years. Access to training opportunities is another barrier, and computer training is particularly important. Consequently, many persons with disabilities are not adequately prepared for jobs even if they were available, and due to the global economic and financial crisis, there has been severe contraction in job markets worldwide, especially in traditional “white collar” employment.

The importance of the design and development of accessible industrial and manufacturing facilities should not be understated or underestimated. However, an accessible facility does not include just a ramp and an accessible washroom for a person with mobility impairment; it includes accessible signage, accessible communication with persons who have a hearing impairment and accessible information and communication.

It is especially important in developing countries to consider the entire pool of eligible employees, including persons with disabilities. For example, a hearing impairment does not preclude an individual from being a good welder. Similarly, vision impairment does not impede a person’s ability to be efficient on an assembly line.

In addition to creating accessible “places” of employment, and “opportunities” for employment, consideration needs to be given to ensuring the development of accessible infrastructure, including accessible transportation systems capable of providing a means to get from one’s home to places of work and home again.

While changes are gradually being made to make public spaces more accessible, efforts to seek out and obtain employment are often further hampered by social environments, built environments and transportation environments that are not accessible or are not capable of meeting the needs of all users, including persons with disabilities.