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CULTURAL EVENT FOR DISABLED PERSONS IN THE
ESCWA REGION: AN EVENT TO MARK THE END OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS (1983-1992)
IN THE ESCWA REGION
17-18 October 1992
Amman

FINAL REPORT

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
<u>Chapter</u>	
I. ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT	3
A. Organization of work	3
B. Attendance	4
C. Opening of the Event	4
D. Election of Officers	5
E. Adoption of the agenda	6
F. Documentation	6
G. Proceedings	7
H. Presentation of the recommendations of the plenary session	7
I. Closing session	8
II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION AND A REGIONAL LONG-TERM STRATEGY .	8
III. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS	10
A. Plenary session	10
B. The role of the mass media and public awareness of disability (Working Group I)	11
C. The promotion of NGOS and their effective coordination (Working Group II)	13
D. Legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons in the ESCWA region (Working Group III)	14
ANNEXES	
I. Programme of Work	16
II. List of participants in the Event	18
III. List of background documents	31
IV. Draft long-term strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons towards the year 2010 in the ESCWA region	35



INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 31/123 of 16 December 1976, the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons. This marked one of the United Nations' most successful international events. It was observed in all countries and generated world-wide awareness of the rights, capabilities and needs of disabled persons. For disabled persons themselves, it was a milestone in the long history of the struggle against discrimination and for equal rights. One important outcome of the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) was the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons,^{1/} which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982. The World Programme of Action is based on the principles of human rights, full participation, self-determination, integration into society and equalization of opportunities. It contains a set of guidelines for national, regional and international action. It represents a joint effort of Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to gain universal commitment to recognize the rights of disabled persons and to provide the services and opportunities for their full participation in society.
2. In adopting its resolution 37/53 of 3 December 1982 on implementation of the World Programme of Action, the General Assembly also proclaimed the period 1983-1992 the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. The Decade provided a time-frame for Governments to intensify their efforts to improve the living conditions of disabled citizens. It was recommended that monitoring and evaluation be carried out, at periodic intervals, at international and regional levels, as well as at the national level, in order to assess the situation of disabled persons and to measure development.
3. At the international level, the Global Meeting of Experts to Review the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons at the Mid-Point of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was convened by the United Nations Office at Vienna. The Meeting, which was held at Stockholm from 17 to 22 August 1987, recognized that the opportunities offered by the Decade of Disabled Persons to stimulate implementation of the World Programme of Action had not been fully exploited and that insufficient progress had been made throughout the world.
4. Furthermore, the Expert Group Meeting on Alternative Ways to Mark the End of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, held in May 1990, agreed that issues and concepts pertaining to the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons are of fundamental importance and therefore should be given priority in the formulation of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond. The theme of such a strategy, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 45/91 of 14 December 1990, is "A Society for All: From Awareness to Action".

^{1/} World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (United Nations, New York, 1983), published by the United Nations Department of Public Information.

5. In 1991, the General Assembly invited Member States and organizations of the United Nations system to prepare the preliminary outline of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond. In accordance with the recommendations Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/9 entitled "The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons", an expert group meeting was held in conjunction with the conference entitled "Independence '92" organized by the British Columbia Pavilion Corporation in collaboration with Disabled People's International and other non-governmental organizations, with the primary objective of drawing up a global long-term strategy to further implementation of the World Programme of Action to the year 2000 and beyond. The Meeting proposed several practical recommendations in areas such as legislation, community-based rehabilitation (CBR), independent living, human rights, economic independence and the creation of an effective mechanism to coordinate and monitor activities from 1992 onwards.

6. At the regional level, in November 1989, ESCWA organized the Conference on the Capabilities and Needs of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA Region, held in Amman from 20 to 28 November 1989 and attended by some 200 Arab and international experts, 40 of whom were disabled persons. The Conference put forward 55 concrete recommendations including those on promoting public awareness on the capabilities of disabled persons and the role of mass media, and disability legislation NGO coordination.

7. This Cultural Event was an immediate follow-up activity to the 1989 ESCWA conference, with special emphasis on promoting public awareness of the capabilities and creativity of disabled persons. A series of cultural events by disabled artists and NGOs took place with the aim of marking the end of the Decade in an Arab way. The event was also very timely, as it provided a forum for disabled artists and participants to demonstrate their capabilities and creativity within the framework of the global end-of-Decade promotional campaign. The substantive sessions of the Event were aimed at evaluating the implementation of the World Programme of Action at the end of the Decade in the ESCWA region and at formulating a regional long-term strategy, comprising a new set of action-oriented objectives to enhance the progress already attained during the decade. Furthermore, they were devised to raise the awareness of regional mass-media professionals regarding their role and responsibilities towards disabled persons, and to strengthen coordination among NGOs of disabled persons. Throughout deliberations, special attention was given to the full participation of disabled experts. The chairperson of the plenary session was a blind expert. Jordanian sign language interpretation was made available in the plenary session to ensure the participation of deaf persons in the discussions. Selected background documents were available in the form of taped voice for blind experts, and the conference venue was selected in order to ensure accessibility by physically disabled persons to its facilities.

8. The ESCWA secretariat hopes that the wide dissemination of this final report of the Event -- which is available in English and Arabic and in the form of synthesized voice and large print for visually impaired persons -- will contribute to the strengthening of regional activities in the field of disability and will help policy makers, researchers, caretakers and disabled individuals themselves to identify areas of interest for future action.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT

A. Organization of work

9. The Event included the following major components:

(a) Substantive presentations and discussions on disability issues:

(i) A plenary session (in the form of substantive presentations and discussions) on assessment of the implementation of the World Programme of Action at the end of the Decade in the ESCWA region and on formulation a draft regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010 to further the implementation of World Programme of Action in countries of the region. The session was conducted in English, Arabic and Jordanian sign language;

(ii) Three working group sessions: on the role of the mass media towards disability and public awareness; on the promotion and coordination of NGOs; and on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons in countries of the ESCWA region. The former two sessions were conducted in Arabic only and the latter was conducted in English and Arabic;

(b) A series of cultural and sports events by disabled persons:

(i) A continuous exhibit of artistic and educational work by disabled persons was organized at the Royal Cultural Centre (RCC), showing their capabilities and creativity. It was organized in collaboration with the Executive Council of the General Union of Voluntary Societies and under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein;

(ii) Under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein and in collaboration with the Executive Council of the General Union Voluntary Societies, a continuous charity bazaar was organized by Jordanian NGOs at the RCC;

(iii) In collaboration with the Regional Centre for Rehabilitation and Training of Blind Girls, a concert by blind girl musicians was held at the RCC;

(iv) In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, a silent theatre was performed at the RCC by three Jordanian groups of deaf actors;

(v) Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid and in collaboration with the Jordan Sports Federation for the Handicapped, sports competitions by Jordanian athletes were organized at the sports field of the Federation.

10. The Event was organized in accordance with the timetable contained in the programme of work (annex I).

B. Attendance

11. The Event was attended by: disabled artists; delegates from ESCWA member States; regional and international experts participating in an individual capacity; representatives of NGOs; observers from other United Nations organizations and embassies; mass media experts; and a number of eminent personalities. Some of the participants in substantive discussions were themselves disabled (see annex II for the list of participants).

C. Opening of the Event

12. The Event was opened by Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein. In her opening statement, Her Majesty referred to Jordan's pride in hosting ESCWA, emphasizing its close association with the organization as an essential component of a pan-Arab and regional perspective on human and economic development issues, a perspective which translated international objectives into regional priorities and national actions. She also outlined progress made by ESCWA during the Decade, including the 1st Meeting of the ESCWA Inter-Organizational Task Force on Disability convened in Amman in 1987 and the ESCWA Conference on the Capabilities and Needs of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA Region held also in Amman, in November 1989. She stressed the importance of resolving the severe economic constraints plaguing the region and its development efforts, and the need to develop efficient and cost-effective ways of providing disabled persons with the facilities and opportunities they require to play a full and productive role in society, including reducing impairments through diagnostic and medical means and greater family awareness, provision of basic, community-based rehabilitation and training services and developing a positive attitude towards disabled persons. Finally she suggested five specific areas for further action at the regional level, namely: providing equal opportunities for disabled persons to be integrated into the full scope of society; integrating services for disabled persons into the broader network of social and health care; effective integration of technical and human capabilities at the regional, subregional and national levels, including the creation of a pool of facilities and staff at the regional level; developing the capabilities of disabled persons to become as independent as possible; and expanding existing markets for new and appropriate technologies designed for disabled persons.

13. During the opening session, the Deputy Director of the Social Development Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, addressed the Event. He reaffirmed that the United Nations' objective of creating "A Society for All" would require the actual involvement of disabled persons themselves, by exploiting every opportunity, making every effort for self-development as well as sharing a common vision and working together towards the goal. Also, he reiterated that the United Nations was engaged in drafting a long-term strategy for the year 2000 and beyond with the theme of "A Society for All" which would identify the measures that need to be taken by the world community to enhance and preserve the quality of life of disabled persons. He concluded his address by congratulating ESCWA on the active role it had played in promoting the goals of the World Programme of Action during the Decade.

14. A message from the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden was delivered by Mr. Anders Elofsson, the First Secretary of the Swedish Embassy. The message noted that the international community attached growing importance to disability matters. The world was now much more willing than it was ten years ago to come to grips with these issues. There was good reason to look upon the Decade as a starting point rather than as the closing of a chapter, and there was hope that the United Nations would develop a long-term strategy of further measures for the fullest participation of disabled persons and for the equalization of opportunities for them.

15. During the opening session, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA addressed the Event and welcomed the participants. He stated that this gathering in Amman took place in recognition of the capabilities and creativity of disabled individuals and in an earnest search for information and solutions to ongoing problems and obstacles related to disabled citizens in ESCWA countries. He added that the Decade had increased public awareness of disability issues and facilitated some of the progress made in the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of disabled persons in the ESCWA region. He continued saying that such awareness had not yet been fully translated into concrete policy and action. He expressed the opinion that there would be an increasing need during the years from 1992 to 2001 to give fresh impetus to the implementation of the World Programme of Action in the ESCWA region beyond the Decade and to strengthen regional cooperation in order to achieve the objectives of "A Society for All". He emphasized that even if all political disturbances in the Arab world were to cease tomorrow, the resulting human problems, including those of disability, would long remain. He added that comprehensive care for disabled persons required governmental support, as well as the assistance of voluntary societies responsible for providing services for disabled persons. Concluding his address, he expressed his gratitude to the host Government and collaborating organizations, and urged participants to contribute to the success of the Event through suggestions and proposals based on their varied and rich professional and personal experiences.

16. At the end of the opening session, a Testimonial the Secretary-General of the United Nations was awarded to Her Royal Highness Princess Majida Ra'ad in recognition of her devotion and commitment to the cause of disabled persons. The Testimonial was presented to Her Royal Highness Princess Majida Ra'ad by Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein.

D. Election of Officers

17. The following persons were elected Officers of the Plenary session and working group discussions:

Plenary session

Chairperson

Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ghanim

Vice-Chairperson

Mr. Abdullah Al-Khatib

Rapporteur

Ms. Amal Nahas

Working group session

Moderator of Working Group 1
on the promotion of NGOs

Ms. Amani Kandil

Moderator of Working Group 2
on the promotion of
NGOs

Mr Abdullah Al-Khatib

Moderator of Working
Group 3 on legislation
for the disabled

ESCWA secretariat

E. Adoption of the agenda

18. The Event adopted the following agenda:

Plenary session

1. Assessment of the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in countries of the ESCWA region at the end of the United Nations Decade.
2. Formulation of the regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010 to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action.

Working group sessions

3. The role of the mass media towards disabled persons and public awareness.
4. The promotion of NGOs and their effective coordination.
5. Legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons in countries of the ESCWA region.

F. Documentation

19. Eighteen background documents on the agenda items were prepared and made available in English, Arabic or both. A few core documents are available in the format of tape-recorded voice for blind persons. A complete set of documents was sent to each participant who confirmed his/her participation prior to the Event for review and study. The documents prepared for the event are listed in annex III. A few additional documents on speeches and presentations were distributed to participants during the plenary session and group sessions, together with papers received during the Event from various organizations and NGOs. Several copies of ESCWA publications on disability issues and a database on disability were also available for reference at the information desk throughout the Event.

G. Proceedings

20. The scientific programme of the Event covered several top-priority themes of disability. In accordance with the time-table contained in the programme of Work (annex I), the first day was dedicated to presentations and discussions in the plenary session, and the second day was devoted to working-group discussions on three technical issues of disability. The first day, during the plenary session, Prof. Ron Brouillette, an ESCWA consultant, presented a paper for discussion on implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in countries of the ESCWA region. Following his presentation, a Social Affairs Officer of ESCWA briefly reviewed the implementation of the World Programme of Action and presented a draft regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010 for discussion and finalization by participants. The staff also demonstrated computer-based synthesized-speech technology for both totally and partially blind persons. In the discussion that followed these presentations, participants raised issues regarding the achievements and constraints during the Decade and the need for an action-oriented regional strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action in the ESCWA region beyond the Decade. The drafting committee nominated by the plenary session met and further considered the draft report by the ESCWA secretariat. The participants requested that the conclusions and recommendations of the Cultural Event be brought to the attention of the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

21. During the second day, three parallel working-group sessions were held on the role of the mass media towards disability, on effective coordination of NGOs and on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons on countries of the region. During the course of the substantive discussions, several realistic recommendations covering each subject were made. These are presented separately in the final chapter of this report.

22. The cultural programme of the Event covered a variety of cultural and sports activities to highlight the creativity and capabilities of disabled artists and athletes to celebrate the end of the Decade in an Arab way. Sports competitions were held under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid. Throughout the Event, the RCC exhibit halls featured continuous exhibits of artistic work by disabled persons and a charity bazaar organized by Jordanian NGOs. Two major cultural events were also held, a concert by blind musicians at the Regional Centre for Training and Rehabilitation of Blind Girls and a play by three Jordanian silent-theatre groups.

H. Presentation of the recommendations of the plenary session

23. The recommendations prepared by the drafting committee were presented to participants during the closing of the Event on 18 October 1992. It was agreed that the recommendations and draft long-term strategy would be further developed by the ESCWA secretariat in line with the comments of all participants in the plenary discussions; these are to be brought to the attention of the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

I. CLOSING SESSION

24. During the closing ceremony on 18 October 1989, which was attended by His Excellency Mr. Ameen Mashagbeh, Minister of Social Development, a brief report on the Event, including the recommendations was read by the Rapporteur, Ms. Amal Nahas. Jordanian sign language translation was available. The report was also distributed to participants. His Excellency Mr. Ameen Mashagbeh officially closed the Event with congratulations on the successful completion.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION AND A REGIONAL LONG-TERM STRATEGY

25. During the deliberations of the plenary session, the participants reached agreement on the following framework within which regional activities could be developed in the remaining period.

Also, the draft long-term strategy towards the year 2010 prepared by the ESCWA secretariat (see the draft long-term strategy in annex IV) was endorsed as a basis for the regional strategy of ESCWA to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action to be brought to the attention of the forthcoming session of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, after including comments from all participants.

26. It should be recognized that 1992 is not the end of the Decade of Disabled Persons but rather the beginning of continuing efforts to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action in the ESCWA region. To this end, ESCWA's activities and efforts should continue and expand within the context of an ESCWA Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) and the framework of a long-term regional strategy concerning disabled persons in the ESCWA region. The activities outlined in the above draft regional strategy towards the year 2010 (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG/1/18) provide guidelines for such a strategy under the following priorities:

- (a) Prevention of disability;
- (b) Rehabilitation for all in need;
- (c) Promotion and protection of human rights;
- (d) Development of independent living;
- (e) Promotion of community-based rehabilitation (CBR);
- (f) Enhancement of economic independence;
- (g) Fully accessible society;
- (h) Legislation, coordination and governing mechanisms as main instruments for improving the status of disabled persons;
- (i) Promotion of public awareness of the capabilities and creativity of disabled persons;

(j) Cooperative efforts and new partnerships.

27. The Event expressed the need to review the above priority themes for further concrete action, tied to targets within a specific time-frame, with particular emphasis on the following specific areas:

(a) Development of disabled of a dynamic regional coordinating committee that includes parents of disabled and disabled leaders;

(b) Revitalization of national rehabilitation committees and similar bodies and encouraging them to include disabled leaders in order to influence national policies and practices;

(c) Continuation of regional and national public-awareness campaigns that project the positive images of disabled persons;

(d) Development of national prevention and early intervention programmes that are closely linked to primary health care systems;

(e) Development of national personnel training facilities with intra-regional exchange of students and instructors;

(f) Facilitation of the exchange of national information and experience, particularly through a regional coordination body composed of selected regional experts;

(g) Development of model services such as community integration, CBR and income-generation schemes;

(h) Enactment of national legislation using international/regional guidelines with the funding to back it up;

(i) Mobilization of new (such as private enterprises) and existing regional and international financial and human resources for personnel preparation and services development and coordination. To this end, the Regional Bureau of the Middle East Committee for the Affairs of the Blind could expand its activities to include all categories of disabilities;

(j) Setting up income-generation schemes that provide revolving loans/funds and other support;

(k) The use of community-based approaches over institutional approaches;

(l) Encouragement of employment promotion incentives in ESCWA Member States;

(m) Giving priority to regional expertise over external resource persons. When outside advice is required, caution should be applied in recruiting resource people;

(n) Giving priority to training and pooling of financial and human resources at the regional level;

(o) Giving ESCWA stronger support from its member countries for the continuation of its efforts in promoting regional activities related to disability prevention and rehabilitation.

III. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Plenary session

28. During the plenary session, Prof. Ron Brouillette, an ESCWA consultant, presented a paper evaluating the implementation of the World Programme of Action in the ESCWA region at the end of the Decade. In his presentation, he said that a careful review of the available information showed that the Decade activities had resulted in the development of a number of significant initiatives to raise regional awareness and improve the quality of life for disabled persons in the region -- including improved preventive measures and good training programmes in some fields -- and the establishment of a few good model services in the region as well as a well-organized support system at the regional level. He added, however, that continuing efforts were still needed to turn awareness and these initiatives into action to arrive at more concrete positive changes facilitating the full integration of disabled citizens into society.

29. He analysed several strengths of disability-related services in the ESCWA region, including near uniformity of culture and language, strong religious influences, some well-trained professionals, some model services, a well-organized regional support system, relatively high GNPs and well-developed infrastructure of countries of the region, and the will to develop services. However, he analysed several weaknesses, including: political conflicts inhibiting social development; lack of public information and awareness; lack of trained personnel in some fields of disability; disparities among ESCWA nations in terms of GNP, government influence and services development; inequitable access to basic services amongst those in need of them; lack of involvement of disabled persons; few isolated models of good practice; limited prevention programmes; and negative aspects of cultural factors (taboos, shames, etc.).

30. He concluded his statement by presenting several recommendations including the continuation of the growing momentum by declaring a second Decade of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA region, tying the second Decade to specific national and regional objectives and using the "92 Rehabilitation Index" as a baseline for monitoring regional progress.

31. A Social Affairs Officer from the ESCWA secretariat presented the draft long-term strategy towards the year 2010 (E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WP.1/18) for discussion and emphasized that the validity of the World Programme of Action and its main components (prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities need to be reaffirmed. The staff mentioned that although many achievements were made in the region during the Decade, particularly in increasing public awareness of the capabilities and needs of disabled persons at the regional level, the main objectives of disabled persons in the ESCWA region have not yet been fully attained. She urged participants to recognize the need for proclaiming a new ESCWA Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002)

with a view to giving fresh impetus to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. She also demonstrated the application of a computer-based speech synthesizer for blind individuals.

32. In the discussions that followed these presentations, some participants raised several issues regarding the achievements and constraints in the implementation of the World Programme of Action during the Decade, and the majority of the participants endorsed the idea of continuing the efforts to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond the decade and of proclaiming a new ESCWA Decade of Disabled Persons. However, several participants mentioned the need for a regional strategy that is more concrete and action-oriented. They also highlighted the role of the United Nations in general and ESCWA in particular in promoting awareness and dissemination of information on disability issues. The questions of coordination, exchange of experience and availability of financial resources and development of CBR were also discussed. Research and education, particularly family education regarding disability, were also stressed. A regional centre to deal with all questions related to disability including coordination and research was also discussed.

B. The role of the mass media and public awareness of disability
(Working Group I)

33. The main topics of the background paper were presented by Ms. Amani Kandil, moderator of the session, and discussed by the participants, who later drafted the guidelines for enhancing the role of the mass media regarding disability. The following is a summary of discussions during the session:

(a) Approaching the mass media representatives in the Arab countries of the region to include disability issues in their coverage and programmes, and to make an effort to promote public awareness and raise the standard of their own awareness of the importance of active participation by disabled individuals of their integration into society, taking into consideration that the mass media should make it a priority to pay attention to disability issues on a permanent basis;

(b) Special attention should be given to providing adequate information to the media personnel in charge of information, including training and provision of financial and technical resources such as books, references, directories and service centres, to increase their capacity for production of suitable programmes and media materials;

(c) The mass media should be encouraged to focus on the positive and creative aspects of the disabled, to project people with disabilities in ways that whenever possible demonstrate their varied, positive and multidimensional participation in society, for example, sports where disabled people have been very successful;

(d) It is important to encourage various Arab governmental and non-governmental organizations to organize educational and training sessions with the concerned parties (i.e. decision makers, mass-media representatives, disabled persons, etc.). It was also recommended to organize a seminar to promote the continuous relation between professionals and mass-media

representatives, and to discuss successful implementations of "mass-media related programmes in the field of disability" in the ESCWA region;

(e) The participants affirmed the importance of merging various disability programmes, including those related to family, health, and society since this would create better coordination and sharing of resources in order to reach the goals set;

(f) Special attention should be given to disabled children through books, television, cinema and theatre, by encouraging Arab artists to write about the positive aspects of disability. It is also necessary to promote the creative capabilities of disabled children through special training programmes;

(g) The mass media should be encouraged to report on NGO activities (and not just the activities of government organizations) and to focus on the role of NGOs in their support and development of programmes for disabled persons;

(h) Adequate information must be ensured for the disabled, with special attention given to the blind, and the deaf and mute;

(i) Intensive efforts should be made through the various media to promote public awareness in the community and promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons and to correct negative ones;

(j) Educational and training programmes for disabled persons as well as their families should be promoted in order to facilitate rehabilitation and communication between them;

(k) Regional cooperation among countries in the ESCWA region should be promoted regarding the role of mass media and disability. The participants proposed setting up a "mass media centre" (through NGOs or by ESCWA) for the exchange of expertise and information related to the role of mass media and disability;

(l) The mass media should provide basic information about how to prevent disability, as well as information related to services and programmes for disabled persons;

(m) Further, to promote programmes and mass-media information about disability, prizes could be awarded yearly to the best article or programme that dealt with disability or promoted the integration of the disabled into "normal" life;

(n) It was reaffirmed that the media is a basic means of providing disabled persons with the information they need and of changing social attitudes with a view to ensuring their acceptance and integration into overall development plans and programmes;

(o) Maximum benefit should be drawn from advanced technologies in the world to improve communication equipment in line with socio-economic programmes suitable for given country.

C. The promotion of NGOs and their effective coordination
(Working Group II)

34. The coordinator of the working group made a brief presentation on the background paper entitled "The role of NGOs in the welfare of disabled persons: a case-study of Jordan". Following his presentation, the participants discussed the main topics of the paper and drafted the following guidelines for promoting the role of NGOs in the welfare of disabled persons:

General issues

- (a) Statistics on disability should be more accurate and comprehensive;
- (b) Present welfare services are not effectively implemented; therefore, welfare services delivery should be improved and better coordinated;
- (c) The standard of qualifications of specialists such as therapists for disabled persons should be upgraded;
- (d) Salaries of specialists should be raised and other incentives should be introduced in order to attract qualified personnel working for disabled persons;
- (e) Practicality and "down-to-earth" should be the base of all services for disabled persons;
- (f) The Ministry of Education should develop programmes of special education for disabled children and allocate appropriate budgets. Other governmental sectors should make adequate financial allocations for services as well;
- (g) The "mainstreaming" approach to education of disabled children should be strengthened. Particularly, efforts should be made to integrate slow learners and physically disabled children into regular classes;
- (h) Legislation which would enhance the prevention of disability should be enacted;
- (i) Sound and close medical advice and observation of perinatal, prenatal and post-natal mothers should be considered as one of the most effective preventive measures against genetic disabilities;
- (j) The public should be made aware of cultural factors related to prevention of disability.

Issues related to NGOs

- (k) NGOs should act as "pressure groups" to advocate the legislative and human rights of disabled citizens;
- (l) Involvement in voluntary work for disabled persons should be encouraged mainly through ensuring social and economic security, and through early childhood learning;

(m) NGOs should continue to be actively involved in all issues of disability. Their work and services should be mainstreamed and well coordinated rather than being independent and isolated;

(n) A proposal was made for the General Union of Voluntary Societies in Jordan to carry out awareness-promotion activities and programmes at the community and family level;

(o) A proposal to establish a superior council for disability was made;

(p) Specialized centres should encourage production-oriented projects such as farming and carpentry. The centres or NGOs would be considered economic investment institutions and self-sufficient and profit-making organizations, fully utilizing disabled individuals as necessary economic inputs (labour force);

(q) Planners and concerned officials should be informed of pilot projects and existing innovative examples in the region;

(r) Based on experience that showed that disabled persons are productive, efforts should be made in order to provide employment opportunities for qualified disabled persons in the open labour market;

(s) A proposal was made to encourage the Ministry of Education to publish books/stories on disabled children who are successful and productive;

(t) It was stressed that work in the field of disability should continue, and that concerned personnel should try not to be overwhelmed by any piecemeal progress made, because there is always more to do and achieve.

D. Legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons in the ESCWA region
(Working Group III)

35. The representative from the ESCWA secretariat briefly covered the existing disability-related legislation in countries of the ESCWA region, and analysed the overall trend of legislation and human rights in the region. The representative from the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs presented a paper entitled "Legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons", summarizing the historical development of disability and legislation at the global level. Their presentations were the basis for the discussions about legislation in the ESCWA region. The working group made some practical suggestions regarding future measures to implement legislation for the benefit of disabled citizens in the ESCWA region. The following is a brief summary of the discussions and suggestions during the session:

(a) There is a need in the ESCWA region for disability-related legislation. It is the only way to bring about governmental commitment to implement the necessary programmes for disabled citizens;

(b) There is a need to agree on the definition of disability (there is no consensus about the definition in the region). This would facilitate

educational and training programmes and provide Governments with the necessary information for allocating their limited resources to the most needy;

(c) The need for legislation is different from one country to another. Some countries may require special legislation in order to achieve their goals, while other countries may be able to reach the same results through general legislation. The need should be analysed, and the best approach should be decided upon, taking into account the social and cultural factors of the given country. However, among the participants in this working session, there was an agreement that general legislation is preferred to special legislation for disabled citizens. The participants agreed that special legislation might be supplementary in order to cover some specific issues of disability;

(d) There is an urgent need to review the existing general legislation in countries of the ESCWA region in order:

- (i) To promote the concept of human rights and the freedom to form unions and associations, and to promote the establishment of organizations of disabled persons at the grass-roots level;
- (ii) To improve existing legislation and instigate new, positive legislation in favour of disabled citizens through political lobbying;
- (iii) To guarantee "accessibility: by disabled persons not only in terms of physical environment (e.g. barrier-free architecture) but also in terms of equal "accessibility" to information (such as access to PCs, data banks and other office automation devices);
- (iv) To revitalize the role of existing national coordination committees or equivalent bodies in the region.

(e) There is a need to create special "ombudsmen" to monitor the implementation of disability-related legislation. An independent organization composed of representatives from both the private and public sectors might be needed in order to supervise the implementation of the relevant legislation in each country;

(f) There is a need to develop and coordinate close cooperation between various decision-making bodies and various ministries;

(g) It is important that organizations of disabled persons themselves put pressure on the Government, as it is most unlikely that the Government will take initiatives to enact laws in favour of disabled citizens; rather, it tends to react to strong pressure.

ANNEX I

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Saturday, 17 October 1992

- 9 - 11 a.m. Registration.
- 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Opening by Mr. Abdullah Al Khatib, President of the Executive Council of the General Union of Voluntary Societies, of bazaar by NGOs and exhibit of artistic work by disabled persons.
- 11 - 11.45 p.m. Opening of the Event at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein.
Speech by the Deputy Director of the Social Development Division, United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.
Speech by Mr. Anders Elofsson from the Swedish Embassy on behalf of the Swedish Government.
Speech by the Executive Secretary of ESCWA.
Presentation of the Testimonial from the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Her Royal Highness Princess Majida Ra'ad.
Administrative announcements by ESCWA secretariat.
- 11.45 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Reception.
- 12.30 - 2.00 p.m. Lunch break.
- 2 - 5 p.m. Plenary session.
- 2 - 3.15 p.m. Session on:

The implementation of the World Programme of Action (WPA) concerning Disabled Persons in countries of the ESCWA region at the end of the Decade;

Preparation of the regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010.

(The session was held in English, Arabic and Jordanian sign language.)

A. Election of Officers.

B. Presentation on the implementation of WPA in the ESCWA region by Prof. Brouillette.

C. Presentation on the formulation of the regional long-term strategy by the ESCWA secretariat.
- 3.15 - 3:30 p.m. Coffee break

- 3:30 -5 p.m. Discussion and drafting of the long-term strategy towards the year 2010 in the ESCWA region.
- 3 - 5 p.m. Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid, and in collaboration with the Jordan Sports Federation for the Handicapped, sports competitions by Jordanian teams at the premises of the Jordan Sports Federation.
- 5 - 5.15 p.m. Closing of the sports competition by Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein and His Royal Highness Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid.
- 5 - 7 p.m. Drafting of the long-term strategy in the drafting committee.
- 8 - 9.30 p.m. Concert performance at the Royal Cultural Centre by blind musicians from the Regional Centre for Rehabilitation and Training of Blind Girls.

Sunday, 18 October 1992

- 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Continuous exhibit of educational and artistic work by disabled persons and charity bazaar by NGOs.
- 10 a.m. - 12 noon Parallel working sessions:
- Group I: The role of the mass media towards disabled persons and public awareness (chaired by Ms. Amani Kandil), in Arabic;
- Group II: The promotion of non- governmental organizations (NGOs) and their effective coordination (chaired by Mr. Abdullah Al-Khatib), in Arabic;
- Group III: Legislation to guarantee the rights of the disabled in the ESCWA region (chaired by the ESCWA secretariat), in Arabic and English.
- 12 noon - 2.30 p.m. Lunch break.
- 2:30 - 5 p.m. Continuation of the parallel sessions:
Group I: The role of mass media;
Group II: Promotion of NGOs;
Group III: Legislation.
- 5:30 - 6 p.m. Closing of the Cultural Event at the Royal Cultural Centre by His Excellency Mr. Ameen Mashagbeh, Minister of Social Development.
- 8 - 9.30 p.m. In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, a silent-theatre performance by three Jordanian groups of deaf actors.

Annex II

List of participants in the Event

A. Eminent personalities

Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein

His Royal Highness Prince Ra'ad Bin Zeid

Her Royal Highness Princess Majida Ra'ad

B. Member States

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Mr. Anders Elofsson
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Amman, Jordan

Mr. Roland Messeti
Second Secretary
Embassy of Canada
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Annex III

List of background documents*

<u>Document title</u>	<u>Symbol</u>
Aide-Memoire (English and Arabic)	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/INF.1
Draft organization of the work (English and Arabic)	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/L.1
Annotated provisional agenda (English and Arabic)	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/L.1/Add.1
A background paper for discussion on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons:	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/2
Guidelines for workshops on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons	
A background paper for discussion on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons:	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/3
Manual on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons	
A background paper for discussion on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons:	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/4
A compendium of declarations on the rights of disabled persons	
A background paper for discussion on implementation of World Programme of action concerning Disabled Persons in countries of the ESCWA region and preparation of the regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010:	E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/5
Discussion on long-term strategy to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the year 2000 and beyond:	

* Documents are available only in English unless indicated otherwise.

Towards a society for all: from awareness to action

A background paper for discussion on implementation of World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in countries of the ESCWA region and preparation of the regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010:

E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/6

Disability: situation, strategies and policies

A background paper for discussion on implementation of World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in countries of the ESCWA region and preparation of the regional long-term strategy towards the year 2010:

E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/7

World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons
(English and Arabic version)

A background paper for discussion on the role of mass-media:

E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/8

Improving communications about people with disabilities

A background paper for discussion on promotion of non-governmental organizations and their coordination:

E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/9

Guidelines for the development of organizations of disabled persons

A background paper for discussion on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons:

E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/10

Report of the Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on its forty-third session:

Written statement submitted by human Rights Advocates, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

A background paper for discussion on legislation to guarantee the rights of disabled persons:

E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/11

Technical discussion paper on the
United Nations Manual on National
Disability Legislation in
Developing Countries

A background paper for discussion on E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/12
legislation to guarantee the rights
of disabled persons:

Report of ad hoc open-ended working group
to elaborate standard rules on
the equalization of opportunities for
disabled persons
Vienna, 11-15 May 1992
Second session

A background paper for discussion E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/13
on the role of mass media:

The role of the mass media towards the
disabled
(original in Arabic)

A background paper for discussion on E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/14
the implementation of the World
Programme of Action concerning
Disabled Persons:

Introduction, adaptation and transfer
of new and appropriate technologies for
disabled persons in the ESCWA region

A background paper for discussion on E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/15
implementation of the World Programme
of Action concerning Disabled Persons:

Implementation of the World Programme
of Action concerning Disabled Persons
in countries of the ESCWA region at
the end of the United Nations Decade of
Disabled Persons

A background paper for discussion on E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/16
the promotion of non-governmental
organizations and their effective
coordinization:

The role of non-governmental organizations
in caring for the disabled:
A long-term strategy towards the year 2000
and beyond.
The Jordanian experience
(original in Arabic)

A background paper for discussion on E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/17
legislation to guarantee the rights
of disabled persons:

Legislation to guarantee the rights of
the disabled in the ESCWA region

A background paper for discussion on E/ESCWA/SD/1992/WG.1/18
implementation of the World Programme
of Action:

Draft long-term strategy to further the
implementation of the World Programme of
Action concerning Disabled Persons towards
the year 2000 and beyond

Towards a society for all: from
awareness to action.

A background paper for discussion on
implementation of the World Programme
of Action:

Legislation to guarantee the rights
of disabled persons
(CSHDHA, United Nations Office at Vienna)

Annex IV

**DRAFT LONG-TERM STRATEGY TO FURTHER THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED PERSONS
TOWARDS THE YEAR 2010 IN THE ESCWA REGION**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The mandates

(a) General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions on disability issues, including General Assembly resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982 on the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in which the Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action, and resolution 37/53 of 3 December 1982 on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, in which, inter alia, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1983-1992 United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons;

(b) General Assembly resolution 45/91 of 14 December 1990, by which the Assembly, inter alia, invited Member States, specialized agencies and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to implement the agenda for action and the preliminary outline of a long-term strategy to the year 2000 and beyond: A Society for All, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility study on alternative ways to mark the end of the decade;

(c) Economic and Social Council resolution 1991/9 of 30 May 1991, on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons by which it recommended that an expert group meeting be held in conjunction with the conference entitled "Independence 92", with the primary objective of drawing up a long-term strategy to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the year 2000 and beyond;

(d) General Assembly resolution 46/96 of 16 December 1991, stating that the long-term strategy should focus on recommending practical measures in areas such as legislation, community-based rehabilitation, independent living, human rights, economic independence and the creation of an effective international mechanism to coordinate and monitor activities from 1992 and beyond;

(e) Fifty-five concrete regional recommendations on disability issues adopted by the Conference on Capabilities and Needs of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA Region (20-28 November 1989, Amman, Jordan) endorsed as a still valid regional framework within which regional activities could be elaborated in the new Decade beyond 1992.

B. Guiding principles

The validity of the World Programme of Action and its main components (prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities) is strongly reaffirmed.

Although many achievements were made in the region during the Decade, particularly in increasing public awareness of the capabilities and needs of disabled persons at the regional level, the main objectives of the Decade have not yet been fully attained. The majority of disabled persons in the ESCWA region have no access to appropriate medical services, rehabilitation, education, training, employment, shelter or technical aids/technologies. Therefore, an ESCWA Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) should be proclaimed with a view to giving fresh impetus to further the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in the ESCWA region beyond 1992 and to achieve the goals of the Programme, particularly those concerning the full participation and equal opportunities of disabled persons.

The guiding principle for the proposed new Decade should be "A society for all" -- a new, dynamic society which invests in efforts to accommodate all individual differences and strengthen development potential. The full integration of disabled persons in the ESCWA region should go beyond traditional efforts to assist them in adapting to the environment through rehabilitation; it should also lead to eliminating physical and social barriers and adapting the environment to meet their needs.

Community rehabilitation services should be promoted in the region, enhancing community-based support services for disabled persons and the extension of services to their families. This is one of the most effective solutions in helping disabled persons make the critical transition from being passive and dependent upon the community to being positive contributors to society and agents of their own destiny.

Disabled women in the Arab world face a double disability as their normal woman's role in society is greatly diminished. For many children, the presence of an impairment leads to rejection and isolation. Disabled war victims and displaced persons with disability find difficulty for reintegration and resettlement in many communities. Mentally retarded persons, deaf persons without access to communication, those with multiple disabilities and those living in rural communities experience particular discrimination. Priority should be given to these disadvantaged groups of disabled persons.

One of the major achievements of the Decade in the ESCWA region has been the development of organizations of disabled

persons and their empowerment, leading to self-determination. Efforts should be continued and strengthened to invite all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the field of social development to: utilize their expertise to enhance the capabilities and activities of organizations of disabled persons; and to coordinate their activities.

In the ESCWA region, the Decade witnessed the beginning of positive changes in the region's ability to control causes of impairment. However, the incidence of disability is still on the increase due to rapid population growth (which will increase the absolute numbers of persons with disabilities), the aging of the population, worsening economic and social conditions in some parts of the region, and -- particularly -- wars and civil strife. Peace, security and political stability should be recognized as pre-requisites for solving the problem of disability.

The following priorities were suggested at the Expert Group Meeting at the global level held in Vancouver, Canada, and by recommendations of the Conference on Capabilities and Needs of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA Region (Amman, 20-18 November 1989):

- (a) Prevention of disability;
- (b) Rehabilitation for all in need;
- (c) Promotion and protection of human rights;
- (d) Development of independent living;
- (e) Promotion of community-based rehabilitation (CBR);
- (f) Enhancement of economic independence;
- (g) Fully accessible society;
- (h) Legislation, coordination and governing mechanisms as main instruments for improving the status of disabled persons;
- (i) Promotion of public awareness of the capabilities and creativity of disabled persons;
- (j) Cooperative efforts and new partnerships.

II. THE STRATEGY TO FURTHER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION CONCERNING DISABLED
PERSONS TOWARD THE YEAR 2000 AND BEYOND

A. The purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of the Strategy is to increase the capacity of member states, United Nations organizations, governmental organizations, and NGOs to address adequately the issue of disability and to encourage them to develop strategic action plans and to establish permanent planning and monitoring mechanisms for further implementing the World Programme of Action.

B. Concrete activities recommended on priority themes

1. Prevention of disability

(a) Governments, NGOs and concerned institutions in the region should initiate policies and plans to implement programmes regarding prevention of and early intervention regarding disability, taking into account all the causes that lead to disability;

(b) Regional peace and security should be recognized as prerequisites for prevention of disability;

(c) As a way of preventing childhood disability, there should be mass immunization programmes, nutritional programmes and pre-natal care;

(d) Systematic training programmes are needed for mothers, to teach principles of birth spacing and the ability to practice early intervention vis-a-vis childhood disabilities;

(e) The most significant cultural factor in the prevalence of severe disability in the region is the practice of kinship marriage in all communities and among all social classes. Special attention should be given to genetic testing and consultation before marriage.

2. Rehabilitation for all in need

(a) Training programmes should be developed for families of disabled persons in order to encourage positive attitudes towards disability and to help the family deal with disability in an appropriate manner. A training manual for parents covering rehabilitation of disabled children, adults and the elderly should be developed as an essential component of this programme;

(b) Opportunities for primary, secondary and higher education should be made available to disabled persons and "mainstreaming" of disabled persons should be promoted whenever possible;

(c) Governments should set up special education programmes. In this regard, there is a need to train sign-language interpreters for formal education and mass media. Also, provision of educational materials in Braille and audio-visual aids should be encouraged for visually-impaired persons;

(d) Training programmes for trainers should be implemented;

(e) Attention should be given to special-education programmes for mentally retarded persons, severely disabled children and those with multiple disabilities. Special education should also be introduced as a subject in regular teacher-training programmes;

(f) Vocational-rehabilitation programmes are prerequisites for enabling disabled persons to exercise their rights with dignity. Governments should undertake studies on labour-market needs in order to adapt vocational training for disabled persons to those needs. Efforts at mainstreaming in the field of vocational training are also important.

3. Promoting and protecting human rights

(a) Governments should ratify and implement, if they have not yet done so, the International Covenants on Human Rights and other international legal instruments related to human rights and should pay due attention to the application of such instruments to the situation of disabled citizens;

(b) In circumstances characterized by extreme difficulties, the basic human rights of persons with disabilities, particularly disabled women and children, are at risk. In all programmes, disabled persons -- disabled women and children in particular -- should be given special attention in order to ensure that they receive their fair share of resources;

(c) Every effort should be made to include a specific component addressing the basic human needs and interests of disabled persons in all programmes in the community, including activities in the provision of food security, shelter and sanitation, education and employment, health and social services, transportation, family counselling and planning;

(d) A study should be undertaken in the occupied territories of Palestine to monitor events that might increase the incidence of disability or might violate the rights of persons with disability.

4. Development of independent living

(a) In each country or community, organizations of disabled persons should conduct a study on the prerequisites of independent living in that community;

(b) Appropriate peer and community support must be available to facilitate the effective transition of a person with a disability from an institution into the community;

(c) It is clear that the integration of disabled persons in the community often requires the use of new and appropriate technologies or technical aids related to various aspects of disability;

(d) Institutions concerned should formulate programmes to train disabled women to perform various types of housework and to provide them with the necessary aids for that purpose.

5. Promotion of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programmes

(a) Services provided to disabled persons through centralized institutional activities do not always reach sufficient numbers of disabled persons, particularly in rural and remote areas. Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is a desirable means of overcoming this problem. CBR should be promoted as advocated within the framework of the International Year of the Family;

(b) A major prerequisite for the development of CBR is the systematic assessment of existing community-development projects which can satisfy the needs of disabled persons, with the aim of selecting the most appropriate CBR approach for the particular social and cultural conditions of each country or community;

(c) World Health Organization (WHO) primary health care (PHC) programmes should be promoted in the ESCWA region, and components related to disability issues should be included;

(d) NGOs concerned with disabled persons should be given the necessary financial support, especially in view of the fact that the work of such organizations, which are active at the grass-roots levels, is of great importance in meeting the needs of disabled persons;

(e) CBR programmes should encourage the local production of low-cost technical aids and technologies for disabled persons, made from locally available resources.

6. Enhancement of economic independence

(a) Everyone, including a disabled person, has a right to paid employment or self-employment. Appropriate vocational rehabilitation programmes should be provided to them in accordance with current labour-market needs;

(b) Employers' and workers' organizations are encouraged to adopt training policies that are in line with market requirements;

(c) Governments should adopt policies aimed at increasing employment opportunities for disabled persons, including disabled-employment-quota schemes, subsidies, cooperatives, tax reductions and other such incentives;

(d) Governments should also adopt social-security schemes which take into account the needs of disabled persons;

(e) In the countries of the region with few employment opportunities (such as labour-sending countries), the creation of self-employment schemes or cooperatives of disabled should be explored;

(f) Governments which have not yet ratified ILO Convention 159 are encouraged to do so. Their activities in this area should be based on the principles set out in that Convention.

7. Fully accessible society

(a) In city planning and in building and construction legislation, account should be taken of the conditions that facilitate the movement of disabled persons and ensure their safety. Such measures should include infrastructure services, transport and the entrances and interiors of buildings;

(b) Scientific research should be encouraged on the adaptation of the physical and social environment, and the results of such research should be disseminated in Arabic or in the most appropriate form to the media, decision makers and specialists, and disabled individuals, taking into consideration United Nations publications and international standards;

(c) It is very important to develop practical guidelines at the regional level for acquisition planning and procurement, by government agencies and private companies, to ensure the accessibility of disabled employees to electronic office equipment;

(d) The use of computers should be promoted to assist the integration of disabled persons into the community. The process may involve the adaptation of hardware to make it accessible to

various categories of disabled persons and the development of appropriate software packages;

(e) It is extremely important that documentation be made available in an electronic format (e.g., ASCII format) suitable for computer-based outputs (e.g., synthesized-speech, Braille, large-print and tactile output);

(f) Advanced technologies developed in industrial countries should be adapted to meet local needs and transferred to the region through staff training;

(g) It is necessary to adapt the physical environment inside the home to the needs of disabled women, to give them the psychological and practical training to take care of their children and bring them up in a proper fashion;

(h) There is a need to develop a standardized Arabic sign language which is complementary to indigenous national sign languages.

8. Legislation, coordination and governing mechanisms as main instruments for improving the status of disabled persons

(a) The Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons (currently being drafted by the United Nations Office at Vienna) should be adopted as a primary guideline for national policies in the field of disability;

(b) Governments should ratify and implement the International Covenants on Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons, ILO Convention 159, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments;

(c) At the national and the regional levels, disabled persons, both members of organizations and in their personal capacities, should participate in decision-making processes as equal partners. Appropriate legislation should be enacted to this end;

(d) Governments should systematically review existing national development policies and legislation with a view to promoting equalization of opportunities for disabled citizens;

(e) An important condition for the success of national rehabilitation services is effective coordination among various ministries, government agencies and NGOs. It is therefore recommended that national coordination or existing committees be strengthened so that they perform these tasks effectively. Governments should allocate special funds to support these national coordination committees;

(f) Disabled persons should be provided with the possibility of seeking counselling, legal advice and advocacy and a channel for appeal. Such services should be integrated into services available to the general public and should be provided in the language of choice.

9. Promotion of public awareness of the capabilities and creativity of disabled persons

(a) Although the new "Decade" is a decade for translating awareness into concrete action, awareness campaigns should be continued to heighten the profile of disability issues and to provide positive role models;

(b) The role of the mass media should be emphasized as a basic means of providing disabled persons with the information they need and of changing social attitudes with a view to their acceptance and integration into overall development plans and programmes;

(c) Due importance should be attached to: the training of media professionals to help them to assume their responsibilities toward disabled persons; the organization of training programmes; and the teaching of disability issues in schools of mass communication and journalism;

(d) Intensive efforts should be made through the various media to spread awareness in the community and promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons and to correct negative ones. Sign language should be used in educational/public-television programmes;

(e) Appropriate attention should be devoted to the guidance of children, through information programmes aimed at promoting a spirit of cooperation and proper treatment of disabled persons from childhood;

(f) A regional centre should be established for studies and research on information and disabled persons, and a yearly prize should be awarded for the best media item dealing with the issue of disability and to information exchange--programmes on disability among the countries of the region.

10. Cooperative efforts and new partnerships

(a) In view of the new coalitions that are taking shape following the end of the cold war, there are new partners (e.g., private corporations) to address emerging issues of disability;

(b) Voluntary work in favour of disabled persons is an important component of public activities; however, it is still not properly developed in most countries of the ESCWA region. It is therefore recommended that the United Nations volunteer scheme and United Nations junior professional scheme intensify their activities in this region;

(c) ESCWA is requested to establish a separate focal unit on disability-related issues to coordinate regional activities in this field and to follow up the implementation of the recommendations of this Event and the long-term Strategy;

(d) The Regional Bureau of the Middle East Committee for the Affairs of the Blind has played an effective role in serving blind persons and promoting their welfare within and outside the region. However, these services have not been extended to any degree to other categories of disabled persons. It is encouraged to extend the basis of its activities to include other categories of disabled persons;

(e) In order to implement all recommendations, more intensive efforts should be made to obtain the necessary funds for problems of disability. ESCWA as the agency charged with the coordination of the regional activities of the United Nations agencies in the field of disability is requested to take the initiative in fund-raising in order to support its own activities as well as those of other United Nations agencies and NGOs.

III. SELECTING CURRENT PRIORITIES AND SETTING GOALS

While major changes in society are needed in order to reach a society for all, and as all recommendations cannot realistically be implemented simultaneously, a limited number of priorities for the medium term should be identified as well as the time-frame (e.g., the reduction by 25 per cent in the ESCWA region over the next five years of the causes of avoidable impairments which lead to disability).

IV. MONITORING OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS

The implementation of the World Programme of Action and this long-term regional strategy should undergo a periodical monitoring exercise every five years. Such a monitoring at the local, regional and national levels must be based on close cooperation and understanding between organizations for disabled persons and all parties concerned. It is important that continuing efforts be made to foster a spirit of partnership in the interests of disabled persons and society as a whole. Also, among the United Nations agencies, the inter-agency mechanism (ESCWA task force) should be re-vitalized towards more frequent coordinating sessions on a project/programme basis.

