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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social
Development and the twenty-fourth special session
of the General Assembly: priority theme: strategies
for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable
development for all**

Statement submitted by Disability Association of Tavana, 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 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

According to the Iranian Constitution, all Iranians with whatever ethnic and tribal affinities enjoy equal rights and their color, race, language, and other similar attributes are not considered as advantages. Therefore, each individual human being is, due to being a human being, required to enjoy specific rights. Unfortunately, some undemocratic societies (mainly underdeveloped or developing countries) define this clear fact as a “specific advantage” which everyone can, according to his personal beliefs, ignore.

The acceptance of the concept of human rights and the implementation of its provisions for facilitating the living conditions of vulnerable people who have specific needs (including those individuals who suffer from mental and physical disability) is much more important. This issue is a vitally important issue in developing countries like Iran. Unfortunately, disabled individuals in such societies are suffering from three other major problems:

1. Based on their religious beliefs, people look at disabled individuals with pity and commiseration. In order to tackle with this issue, we are required to embark on culture-building practices and make shifts in social attitudes towards the disabled people (including shifts in the attitudes of families, educational and training centers, and the public). Also, we must endeavor to create hope among disabled people through raising their awareness about their rights and the concept of disability.
2. Lack of enough information and regulations related to providing services to disabled people in governmental systems along with cultural poverty among disabled individuals and their families which result in their isolation in, and inevitably their omission from, the society.
3. Accessibility and availability of buildings, enhancement and improvement of standards, and total participation of disabled individuals in designing the physical infrastructures are important issues. These issues are amongst contradictory issues that disabled individuals are faced with in their routine affairs, because participation in social affairs along with other citizens and taking advantage of equal opportunities are considered as primary requirements of the individuals that are suffering from physical disability.

Based on this argument, we have, since 1995, highlighted the important role that states can play in defining appropriate mechanisms and formulating supportive laws in order to enhance the capabilities of disabled people. At the same time, we have presented a new definition of the concept of disability to the world in which disability is described as a mere constraint rather than inability.

As one of the most successful and effective non-governmental organizations in Iran, the Disability Association of Tavana (DAT) has, during the past 23 years, done its best to transform the Iranian society's approach towards the concept of physical disability. In addition to paying due attention to international regulations (such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) to which the Iranian government is abiding, DAT has concentrated on the customization of the spirit of these regulations and challenged the legislative and administrative officials in order to defend the rights of people with disabilities.

Collecting, classifying, and publishing domestic and international rules and regulations related to people with disabilities, raising awareness of disabled people of their rights, following up the implementation of the government commitments regarding the rights of disabled people, and advocating these rights in a technical and

legal manner are some of the most important objectives that have been specified for DAT.

As one of active members of Iranian civil society and a nongovernmental and nonpolitical organization, DAT is opposed to allocate charities for people with disabilities. Taking into account the mental and social needs of disabled people, DAT considers giving charities to disabled individuals as totally contradictory to technical capacity-building among them, because such charities, in practice, undermine the determination of disabled people — especially disabled children — and suppress the feelings of self-esteem in them.

On the other hand, we believe that governments, based on their missions, are required to respect the citizenship rights of people with disabilities based on domestic and international laws and endeavor to observe the proper implementation of these laws.

We also believe that inappropriate capitalistic approaches have nowadays exposed a considerable number of the global population to economic, cultural, and educational poverty. In such inappropriate approaches, the minority capital owners are considered as the rulers of world. It is due to the prevalence of this approach that the majority of the global population have been victims of totalitarianism and materialism and consequently exposed to hunger, poverty, lack of health facilities, etc.

We believe that capital belongs to the almighty God and owners of a capital, regardless of their religious beliefs, are only the God's agents over that capital. They should always take care of their societies and use their capital in order to develop social objectives. Therefore, we assume that divine capitalism is based on ideological beliefs and ideals.

Based on the abovementioned argument, we will, up to 2020, concentrate all our efforts on following issues:

1. Providing educational and training supports to disabled children and young adults with an ultimate objective of creating synergy with the government in order to allocate proper job opportunities to this group of people.
2. Formulating the legal mechanism to encourage the government to support private sector contractors for creating job opportunities for disabled individuals through consultation with lawyers.
3. Promoting public culture-building practices and removing the social obstacles that block the marriage of disabled men and women.
4. Providing financial facilities for disabled people for treatment, marriage, and house purchase.

DAT also expresses its support of the efforts of the international community to combat against racism, ethnic discrimination, xenophobia, and the marginalization of disabled people and has actually initiated such efforts in Iranian society.

In DAT, we believe that international efforts can enhance the level of understanding and accelerate cultural and behavioral shifts in society so that disabled people and vulnerable individuals can enjoy the materialization of their primary rights.

We also believe that the sustainable development process can enhance human rights standards in all societies (including underdeveloped and developing societies).

As an active member of the Iranian civil society, we, therefore, request international organizations to pay due attention to the promotion of sustainable

development in the world (especially in underdeveloped and developing countries) and carry out serious efforts in this regard. This issue is vitally important in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries which nowadays are, more than before, exposed to geopolitical rivalries among global powers.

Our country experienced an 8-year war with Iraq in 1980s as a result of which many Iranians lost their physical health due to bombardments and chemical attacks and were exposed to physical and mental disabilities. Despite the fact that the Iran-Iraq war came to an end some 28 years ago, we still hear in the news that mines remained from the 1980s war are still claiming victims and the number of physical disabilities resulting from that war are increasing.

Regardless of political considerations in relations among regional states, DAT is prepared to embark on joint cooperation with nongovernmental organizations at international and regional levels in order to tackle the problems of those who have been afflicted with physical disability due to existing confrontations, especially in war-stricken countries.

Therefore, we welcome different initiatives that are undertaken in the United Nations for terminating the escalation of tensions in regional and international confrontations. Our stance is based on this fact that, in comparison with common people, disabled individuals are more vulnerable in emergency conditions and in military confrontations.

Also, we recommend the international community to establish cultural exchange missions comprised of people with physical disabilities for the promotion of human rights discourse and standards. We support such initiatives, because they can:

1. Modify the cultural structure and shift the society's outlook towards physical disability;
2. Create hope among the people with physical disabilities through introducing proper thoughts and raising their awareness towards the social rights and capabilities of disabled people.
3. Support fresh ideas, new methodologies, and scientific and technological developments for enhancing the potentials and capabilities of disabled individuals.

In conclusion, we recommend establishing an alliance (or association) of NGOs advocating the rights of people with disabilities in the world. Such an alliance (or association) can, regardless of any political considerations, express its opposition to warmongering rhetoric and practices and follow up the rights of disabled people in underdeveloped or developing countries.

Hope to see a world without boundaries in which people with disabilities are regarded as invaluable social assets.