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Statement on behalf of the International Disability Caucus  
4 February 2005

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I am speaking on behalf of the International Disability Caucus – the unified voice of organizations of people with disabilities from all regions of the world. On this final day of the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the Ad Hoc Committee, the Caucus would like to share with you our thoughts on the negotiations process.

We greatly appreciate the efforts you have made to advance the text of the Convention, and your stamina during these long working days. We would especially like to thank Ambassador Gallegos for his continued support for the process, and Ambassador McKay for his skilful facilitation of the meetings.

We recognize that the last two weeks have seen significant progress in the efforts to synthesize and consolidate the many and various proposed amendments to the Working Group text. For this reason, we hope that we can proceed directly with negotiations during the Sixth Session of the Ad Hoc Committee, rather than undertaking a “second reading” of the articles that have not yet received one.

Although we are satisfied with many of the outcomes of these two weeks, there remain a number of important issues outstanding, which need to be addressed if the Convention is to be successful and supported by all persons with disabilities. First, the substantive content of this Convention must ensure equality of human rights for all people with disabilities. We cannot limit any right, nor exclude any group. Second, there have been many comments by delegates about the Convention being in contradiction with existing national legislation. We fully support this process of self-evaluation. It is essential to identify those components of national legislation which need to be amended, in order to ensure that States’ laws fully reflect our human rights. Too often, States’ laws have been based on a history of stigma, prejudice and paternalism, and the time has come for this to change.

We are also concerned that the Caucus has not been effectively utilized during this stage of the negotiations, and there have been many missed opportunities for us to contribute in clarifying complex issues. It is our expectation that during the Sixth and future sessions a means can be found to ensure a more interactive dialogue with the Caucus. We must also better ensure that people with disabilities from the developing world – who make up at least 80 percent of the global population of people with disabilities – are represented in these negotiations. While attending the Committee meetings is costly for all members of the Caucus, economic constraints make it particularly challenging for developing country representatives to participate. We therefore urge Governments to continue to make timely contributions to the UN Voluntary Fund. We also convey our appreciation to those States that have included representatives of disabled people’s organizations in their delegations and encourage all States to continue doing this.

For Caucus members to be able to participate fully and effectively, we must also have timely access to documents and other information relevant to the process. In particular, this information must be made available in formats accessible to all people with disabilities.

Finally, as we enter the intersessional period, we assure you that we will be working hard to prepare for the next session of the Ad Hoc Committee. We call upon all of you, as well as your colleagues in

capitals across the world, to work with us as we prepare to respond to future articles, and those previous articles where we have indicated that further work is necessary. Through meetings, seminars and continued dialogue, we can strengthen the invaluable momentum that we have generated during these negotiations, and move closer to our common goal of a quality Convention to protect and promote the human rights of people with disabilities. We call upon you to allocate all possible resources to try to finalise the negotiations of this historic Convention in the nearest possible future.

We must all play our part in this historic process, and we must ensure that we do not fail the expectations and aspirations of the 600 million people with disabilities who are pinning their hopes on this United Nations Convention to make a meaningful and positive change in their lives.

Nothing about us without us!  
Thank you Mr. Chairman