



International Leadership Forum for Women with Disabilities

Press Release: June 15, 1997

Women with Disabilities from 80 Countries To Give and Receive Leadership Training

Approximately 500 disabled women and their allies from at least 80 countries will spend June 15-20 in Bethesda, Maryland exchanging practical advice about how to improve their lives and employment prospects. The International Leadership Forum for Women with Disabilities has been designed to offer training and information exchange in the following key areas: aspects of leadership (June 16); education and development assistance (June 17); health and family issues (June 18); employment and self-employment (June 19); and communications and technology (June 20).

The Forum is an official follow-up to the 1995 United Nations 4th World Conference on Women and associated Non-Governmental Organizations' events.

A unique aspect of the Forum is that women with disabilities will be in a dual role---acting as trainers and role models in various main sessions and workshops and as trainees in many of the practical workshops.

Planning the Forum

In preparation for the Forum, the sponsors, which include four international organizations, 25 non-profit organizations and more than 20 U.S. government departments, have been working closely together for a year to create a dynamic program and raise funds for 100 scholarships for disabled women who could not afford to participate. The Forum has been organized by three collaborating organizations: the World Institute on Disability, based in California, Rehabilitation International, based in New York and Mobility International USA, based in Oregon.

Forum Managing Team

U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton is acting as Forum Honorary Chair and two of President Clinton's appointees with first-hand disability experience will Co-Chair: Judith Heumann, Assistant Secretary for Special Education & Rehabilitative Services and Susan Daniels, Assistant Commissioner for

Disability, Social Security Administration. Other Forum officials with first-hand expertise in disabled women's issues include Kathy Martinez of San Francisco, Forum Director, who has conducted leadership training for disability organizations in Europe, Africa and Central America; and Rosangela Berman-Bieler of Rio de Janeiro, Event Coordinator, who has organized international conferences for up to 3000 participants.

Program Highlights

Main presentations will feature experts from Africa, Asia & the Pacific, Europe, and North & Latin America---including: a disabled member of Parliament from South Africa, an import-export entrepreneur from the Philippines, disabled physicians from Russia, Nicaragua and the USA, a Swedish specialist in assisting disability groups in developing countries, disabled women from Uganda & Kenya who are trained in wheelchair-building, a disabled television producer for the BBC and disabled participants from many countries who are also mothers through either childbirth or adoption. For additional information, contact the Forum Secretariat: Third Millennium Events, 711 Brent Rd., Rockville, MD 20850; tel 301 838 3031; fax 301 838 3029; e-mail RBBieler@aol.com