

# **International Labour Organization (ILO)**

## **STATEMENT**

**on the Occasion of the**

## **International Day of Disabled Persons**

**3 December 2004**

### **“Nothing about Us Without Us”**

The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. The observance of the Day, which takes place every 3 December, aims to promote an understanding of disability issues among the general population and to mobilize respect for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

The theme for the Day in 2004 is “Nothing about Us Without Us”. The theme puts focus on the need for the active participation of persons with disabilities in the planning of policies and programmes that affect their lives. The principle is very well understood by the ILO – its Convention No. 159 concerning the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons, 1983, requires ratifying member States to consult “...representative organizations of and for disabled persons” on the formulation, implementation and periodic review of national vocational rehabilitation and employment policies. And its Code of Practice on Managing Disability in the Workplace calls upon employers to consult with disabled workers or their representatives in formulating a workplace strategy on disability.

The practice of consultation with persons with disabilities and representatives of their organizations is required to ensure that resultant public services, including education, training, employment, transport, housing, legal and social services, among others, adequately address their needs and interests. But a practice of regular consultation also demonstrates respect for the rights and contributions of people, who are often marginalized and excluded from full participation as equal citizens in society. “Nothing about Us Without Us” has become the rallying cry for disabled persons and their organizations all over the world. And rightly so, for disability issues continue to be forgotten and men and women with disabilities continue to be ignored in major international efforts of our day to combat poverty and social exclusion. For example, the Millennium Development Declaration and Goals make no reference to persons with disabilities, despite the estimated 625 million disabled persons living in the world. The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) makes no reference to persons with disabilities, despite an estimated 65 million disabled persons living in poverty on the African continent. National poverty reduction strategies in developing countries rarely include persons with disabilities, despite the clear systemic relationship between poverty and disability.

The International Day of Disabled Persons 2004 gives each of us, and especially those of us in the international development community, an opportunity to make a new commitment to examine our work and to make changes so that in everything we do, people with disabilities will affirm that there has been “nothing about us without us”.