



The Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Thursday 5 February 2009

Dear Prime Minister

We write to express our deep concern at the way in which your government is shaping its position on the issue of ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in particular the potential reservation on Article 24 (Education).

We are convinced that a reservation on Article 24 will be met by international disapproval and the registration of numerous objections by foreign governments. Of the 137 countries that have signed the Convention and the 47 countries that have so far ratified it, not one has registered a reservation on Article 24, a fact which clearly demonstrates unyielding global support for inclusive education. Furthermore, a reservation on Article 24 should not be necessary, if your government honours the commitment to inclusive education it has already declared. If the DCSF chooses to support the development of inclusive provision in mainstream settings, thus making this a realistic choice for parents of disabled children, the progressive realisation clause will enable segregated education to continue as long as is deemed necessary.

We also find it unacceptable that government ministers seem to be avoiding communication with representatives of the UN Convention Campaign Coalition (UNCCC) in view of the fact that it represents an extremely broad coalition of 33 disability organisations and their allies. Despite earlier indications that a meeting would be arranged, on 3 February Rye Eden, Assistant Diary Manager to Sarah McCarthy-Fry, in an email to Richard Rieser, UNCCC Chair, said that "due to heavy diary commitments over the coming months" neither Ed Balls nor Sarah McCarthy-Fry are available to discuss the DCSF position on Article 24. We hope you are either able to justify or intervene to reverse this refusal to engage with the people whom the Convention directly concerns.

We remain available to discuss any of the above issues with yourself or your representative and look forward to hearing from you how you intend to proceed. Thank you in anticipation of your genuine interest in the rights of disabled children and young people.

Yours sincerely

Dr Artemi Sakellariadis
Director

Chris Goodey
Assistant Director