



**Press Release
(embargoed until 30th March 00.01am)**

New disability convention signals a global commitment to inclusive education for ALL disabled people

A dawning of a new era of inclusion for disabled people arrives today, because the UK Government will be signing the new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The UK Inclusion movement which includes the Alliance for Inclusive Education, Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, Disability Equality in Education and Parents for Inclusion are delighted that the UK Government will be one of the first member states to sign up to the new Convention. We warmly welcome the UK Government signing the Disability Convention. This will significantly help the Government in a gradual transition from segregated 'special' schooling to fully resourced and well supported inclusion in mainstream education'.

The Convention which, is the first human rights treaty of the 21st century, promotes respect for the inherent dignity of all disabled people and safeguards all disabled people's human rights and fundamental freedoms. The educational rights of disabled children and young people are directly addressed in Article 24, which stipulates an inclusive education system at primary, secondary and tertiary level. In particular, Article 24 specifies that States Parties shall ensure "an inclusive education system at all levels", that "persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education", and that essential staff training "shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities."

The organisations also welcomed the call by Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, for UN Member States to increase efforts to ensure that all children, regardless of differences, learn together. The four bodies said it supported the vision of inclusive education for all which would mean capacity building the mainstream system to provide for ALL and phasing out of segregated 'special' schooling. Mr. Munoz Villalobos told the Human Rights Council in Geneva last week that educational systems should stop seeing disabled children as problems, but rather as an opportunity to enrich schools. Obstacles to inclusive education, he noted, include limited resources and the lack of genuine political will.

Members of the UK Inclusion Movement who were involved in the Ad Hoc Committee negotiations in New York, have issued this joint statement urging the UK Government to begin developing an implementation strategy so that this ground breaking, global opportunity becomes a reality for the 600 million disabled people across the world.

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Further information:

Allfie, CSIE, DEE and PI urge the Government to:

- acknowledge that disabled people continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society
- acknowledge the importance of accessibility to education in ensuring disabled people can fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms
- acknowledge that segregated provision can lead to profound social disadvantage for disabled people
- reaffirm a strong commitment to inclusive education for all children and young people
- take measures, including legislative measures, to promote inclusive education
- engage in constructive dialogue with the disabled community, acknowledging the diversity of disabled people by consulting widely
- establish a mechanism for a co-ordinated, thorough and far-reaching review and restructure of current provision, so as to render all mainstream schools capable of adequately providing for all children and young people
- establish and support a nationwide professional development initiative which will enable *all* school staff to access training aimed at disability awareness as well as practical skills and resources for inclusive education