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The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs

A Flagship Advocacy Initiative of the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

A New Agenda for Digital Accessibility and Assistive Technologies

CSUN, March 18, 2009

Presentation Compiled by G3ict

www.g3ict.org

Agenda

- 1. ICT Accessibility in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**
- 2. Success Factors for Assistive Technologies**
- 3. Next Steps Towards Implementation**

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

- ❖ **Considerable momentum around the world, 139 signatures, 50 ratifications, 2/3 of the world population covered**
- ❖ **Supported by Disabled Persons Organizations parties to its Preparatory Committee**
- ❖ **Will cause local rules, programs and policies similar to the ADA to be adopted around the world over the next 2 to 5 years**
- ❖ **Digital Accessibility is an innovative and important component of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Global ICT Demographics: A Pervasive Risk of Exclusion

❖ **Some statistics:**

- ▶ 850 million personal computers
- ▶ 1.3 + billion Internet users (incl. shared / mobile access)
- ▶ 1.3 billion telephone land lines
- ▶ 1.5 billion TV sets and 2.4 billion radios
- ▶ 3 billion cell phones, 1.8 billion text message users

❖ **Questions addressed by the Convention:**

- ▶ *How to ensure barriers are not created by Information and Communication Technologies?*
- ▶ *How to better use ICT based assistive solutions for persons with disabilities?*

Digital Accessibility Elevated to a Fundamental Right

« To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, *to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems...* » (Article 9)

Definition of Communication

“Communication” includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology (Article2)

New Media and the Internet

« States Parties shall also take appropriate measures to...promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet »

Article 9 (g)

ICTs are an Important Component of the Convention

- ❖ **14 out of the first 32 non-procedural articles of the Convention cover application areas with accessibility mandates including ICTs**
- ❖ **Affordability is an important underlying objective**
- ❖ **Obligations are defined in relation to desired outcomes by application area, rather than in specific technical terms**

ICT Accessibility and Assistive Technologies Mandates

Application Areas	Accessibility Mandates	Facilitating Assistive Technologies
E-Government	✓	
Employment	✓	
Education	✓	✓
Media & Internet	✓	
Consumer Services	✓	
Freedom of Expression	✓	
Emergency Response	✓	✓
Personal Mobility		✓
Independent Living		✓
Culture & Leisure	✓	

Private Sector Services Accessibility

“The state must insure that private entities that offer facilities and services to the public take into account the accessibility of those services” (Art. 9)

(Also mentioned in Art. 21)

Success Factors for Assistive Technologies

- 1. Mandate to promote R&D**
- 2. ICT Products Development and U.D.**
- 3. Reasonable accommodation defined and mandated**
- 4. Obligation for States to set accessibility standards**
- 5. Intellectual property rights**

1 - Promoting R&D for Assistive Technologies

State Parties...undertake or promote research and development of, and to promote the availability and use of new technologies, including information and communications technologies, mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, suitable for persons with disabilities, giving priority to technologies at an affordable cost (Article 4 – g)

2 - ICT Products Development

❖ Early Stage Accessibility Definitions:

- ▶ “Promote the design, development, production and distribution of **accessible information and communications technologies and systems** at an **early stage**, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost” (Art. 9)

❖ Universal Design:

- ▶ “To **undertake or promote research and development of universally designed** goods, services, equipment and facilities, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, which should require the minimum possible adaptation and the least cost to meet the specific needs of a person with disabilities, to promote their availability and use, and to promote universal design in the development of standards and guidelines” (Art. 4)

3 - Reasonable Accommodation Defined and Mandated

“Reasonable accommodation” means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (article 2)

General obligation in article 3, referenced in articles on education and employment

4 - Standards

« States Parties shall take...appropriate measures to develop, promulgate and monitor the implementation of minimum standards and guidelines for the accessibility of facilities and services open or provided to the public »

Article 9-2 (a)

5 - Intellectual Property Rights

“States Parties shall take all appropriate steps, in accordance with international law, to ensure that laws protecting intellectual property rights do not constitute an unreasonable or discriminatory barrier to access by persons with disabilities to cultural materials.”

(Article 30 on Cultural life)

Next Steps Towards Implementation

- ❖ **Legislative process**
- ❖ **Challenges to implement ICT accessibility policies and programs**
- ❖ **G3ict mission and activities**



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Legislative and Regulatory Process

- ❖ **Signing of the Convention**
- ❖ **Ratification (or "accession" later on)**
- ❖ **Parties States must then align their legislation and regulations with the dispositions of the Convention unless already more favorable**
- ❖ **A long but irreversible process with worldwide pressure from NGOs representing persons with disabilities**

Challenges for State Parties to the Convention

- 1. Limited references available to implement the dispositions of the Convention covering ICT Accessibility**
- 2. Speed of change due to technological developments**
- 3. Requirement to make accessible and assistive ICT products affordable :**
 - *Need to create favorable conditions for industry*
 - *Supporting standards for mass production, economies of scale, competition, interoperability and lower prices*
 - *Risk of fragmentation without global harmonization*

G3ict Mission

**“To Facilitate the Implementation of
the Digital Accessibility Agenda
Defined by the Convention on the
Rights of Persons with Disabilities”**

*A Flagship Advocacy Initiative of the
Global Alliance for ICT and Development*



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G3ict Activities

- ❖ **Advocacy, Awareness Raising**
- ❖ **Knowledge hub for Policy Makers and Civil Society:**
 - ▶ **Good practices sharing and references**
 - ▶ **National seminars at government's request**
 - ▶ **Promoting standards**
- ❖ **Tools to be released in 2009:**
 - ▶ **Self-assessment Tool**
 - ▶ **Digital Accessibility and Inclusion Index**
 - ▶ **Toolkit for Policy Makers**
- ❖ **In cooperation with:**
 - ▶ **The Private Sector, Disabled Persons Organizations, International Institutions, Academia, Standards Development Organizations and Governments**



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