

1990

World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons

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Recommended Citation

Steven C. Nelson & Clifford D. Stromberg, *World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons*, 24 INT'L L. 605 (1990)

<https://scholar.smu.edu/til/vol24/iss2/19>

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Jurisdictions in which such restrictions are found will be disfavored as locations for international arbitrations, slowing the development of a variety of arbitration fora throughout the world for use by commercial parties.

International commercial arbitration can be considered a transnational activity which does not involve the practice of law locally in any particular jurisdiction. Ideally, as is the case in the major international fora at present, there should be no restrictions on representation of a party in international arbitration other than any which might be suggested or required by the arbitral tribunal.

Respectfully submitted,
Steven C. Nelson,
Chairman

Section of International Law and Practice

August, 1989

**American Bar Association
Section of International Law and Practice
Section of Individual Rights and
Responsibilities
Report to the House of Delegates
World Program of Action Concerning
Disabled Persons***

RECOMMENDATION

BE IT RESOLVED, That the American Bar Association recommends that the Government of the United States support the recommendation of the Global Meeting of Experts to Review the Implementation of the World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons, held at Stockholm in August 1987, suggesting the preparation of an international convention that would provide for the equalization of opportunities of various categories of the disabled persons; and further recommends that this draft convention contain, *inter alia*, specific provisions for: (a) removing barriers to access to buildings for persons with mobility limitations; (b) making available reading materials in Braille for the

*This Report was approved by the House of Delegates at the Honolulu meeting in August 1989. The Report emanated from the Section's Committee on International Human Rights. Catherine E. Bocskor was principally responsible.

blind and the visually impaired; and (c) arranging for sign-language interpretation and teaching for the deaf and the hearing-impaired.

REPORT

In December 1975 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted, by consensus, a Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons giving specific expression to the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration promoted measures to enable the disabled to become as self-reliant as possible including access to functional training and economic security.

In December 1976 the General Assembly proclaimed the year 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons and for the first time in its history the world began to focus on the fact that more than 450 million of its citizens were physically or mentally disabled. In many parts of the world the year 1981 turned out to be a landmark year and in many areas considerable progress was made in strengthening the relationship and the understanding between the disabled and the non-disabled.

In 1982 the General Assembly reiterated the need to promote the right of disabled persons, to participate fully in the social life and development of their societies and to enjoy living conditions equal to those of other citizens, as well as to share equally in the improvements in living conditions resulting from social and economic development.

That same year the World Program of Action concerning Disabled Persons was adopted by the General Assembly. This 201 paragraph text focused on prevention, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunity for the disabled and contains recommendations for national and international action. The General Assembly also proclaimed the period 1983–1992 as the United Nations Decade for Disabled Persons.

In 1984 the Commission on Human Rights appointed a special rapporteur to study violations of human rights and disability. The special rapporteur made his report in March 1988 and recommended that governments try harder to carry out the thrust of the General Assembly's 1971 Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons.

In 1987 a Global Meeting of Experts was convened by the United Nations in Sweden to review the Implementation of the World Program of Action at the midpoint of the Decade for Disabled Persons. The Expert Group requested, among other things, that the General Assembly convene a special conference on the human rights of the disabled in order to draft an international convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against the disabled. This matter was discussed by the member states at the General Assembly last November, but no agreement was reached because some members favored a convention while others opposed it.