



Advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities worldwide

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ecuador Ratifies UN Disability Rights Treaty, Triggering Entry into Force
Global Disability Network Calls for National Implementation

(New York, United Nations, April 3, 2008): RI congratulates the Government of Ecuador for ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Optional Protocol today, becoming the 20th State Party to the Convention and thereby triggering the treaty's entry into force. In 30 days, the UN Convention will be binding international law for all states that have ratified and will give persons with disabilities in these countries a powerful legal instrument to defend their rights. The ratification of the Convention by 20 States in just one year demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles of non-discrimination, inclusion and equal opportunities for all people in society.

“RI congratulates Ecuador for continuing its leadership role in the global disability rights movement, building on the work of Ambassador Luis Gallegos who served as the first Chair of the negotiations toward the Convention,” said RI President Michael Fox. “Over the years, Ecuador has made great strides in working together with civil society organizations, particularly organizations of persons with disabilities. RI looks forward to continuing this good collaboration with the Government of Ecuador as they take the steps necessary to develop more inclusive laws, programs and policies.”

In an innovative approach to mainstreaming disability rights, RI is working closely with members of the disability community, the Government of Ecuador and local lawyers to study existing disability legislation in Ecuador and present recommendations on how to fully implement the Convention into national law. The research is being conducted by lawyers from the Quito-based firm Corral & Rosales and from Weil, Gotshal & Manges (LLP), one of the leading international law firms, together from national disability organizations and agencies. RI hopes this research, which is also being conducted in Mexico and Costa Rica by local law firms partnered with the national disability movement, will serve as a resource for policymakers, NGOs and legal professionals. This effort is part of RI's Global Advocacy Campaign, which aims to raise awareness and build capacity on the Convention within and beyond the RI network. This initiative is made possible because of the generous support of Irish Aid, Foundation Open Society Institute and an anonymous donor.

“This collaborative approach between national and local actors in Ecuador – the Assembly, Government and civil society, particularly disabled persons' organizations – is essential to ensure that the priorities and needs of persons with disabilities are fully addressed in national disability legislation. The RI Campaign also aims to increase understanding and build cooperation among government officials, parliamentarians, lawyers and persons with disabilities – all of whom have important roles to play in ratification and implementation of the Convention,” said Xavier Torres, Advisor on Disability to the President of Ecuador and President of RI member The National Federation of Ecuadorians with Physical Disabilities. As part of this campaign, RI is also producing information and advocacy materials on the CRPD and organizing a regional conference in Latin America, to take place on April 15-16, 2008.



RI also commends the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Tunisia for ratifying the Convention this week, on March 31 and April 2 respectively, becoming the first two Arab states to do so. To promote the CRPD in the region, RI held the first-ever Arab-African Regional Conference, in October 2007 in Djerba, Tunisia. Conference participants adopted a declaration (see http://www.riglobal.org/events/documents/RI_DjerbaDeclaration_FINAL.doc), which calls for the implementation of the Convention as a partnership between governments and civil society, particularly disabled persons' organizations.

The CRPD is the first human rights treaty of the 21st century and prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life, and includes specific provisions related to rehabilitation, habilitation, education, employment, health and access to information, public facilities and services. The Optional Protocol relates to how individuals or groups can seek redress for violations of the CRPD once national remedies are exhausted. To date, 126 countries have signed the Convention, 71 have signed the Optional Protocol, 20 states have ratified the treaty and 13 states has ratified the Protocol. (Attached is a current list of all signatories and states parties to the CRPD and Optional Protocol.)

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For more information on the UN Convention and contact details of experts within the RI membership, please contact Tomas Lagerwall (sg@riglobal.org), RI Secretary General, or Shantha Rau (shantha@riglobal.org), Senior Program Officer, at +1-212-420-1500.

About RI

Founded in 1922, RI is a global network of organizations of persons with disabilities, government agencies, service providers, researchers and advocates promoting and implementing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities. RI is currently composed of over 700 members and affiliated organizations in 93 nations, in all regions of the world.

RI works closely with other disability organizations, actively participating in the International Disability Alliance (IDA) – a network of the ten global and regional democratic disability organizations – and the International Disability Caucus (IDC) – a loose coalition of disabled peoples' organizations and NGOs which participated in the negotiations toward the Convention. RI also maintains official relations with the United Nations and its agencies and institutions as well as with other international organizations, NGOs and universities.

For more information about RI, please visit our accessible website: <http://www.riglobal.org>.