UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Recommendations of the UNESCO Expert Meeting
"ICTs in the service of persons with disabilities"

20 – 21 May, 2003
UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

We, the participants at the UNESCO Expert Meeting "ICTs in the service of Persons with disabilities" call on UNESCO to take full account of disabled persons in fulfilling its obligations for **"**advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of people, through all means of mass communication", "to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image", to "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge", and "to give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture."

Furthermore, we recognize the important role of information highways as powerful channels for information creation and exchange, for promoting equitable access to social opportunities, for capacity building and training, and for providing new opportunities for all, including those with disabilities, particularly persons with cognitive/intellectual and multiple disabilities, and call on UNESCO to engage its resources in realizing these opportunities by:

Supporting policy measures for achieving equitable access to information, including:

- Submitting recommendations to the World Summit on Information Society which
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  a) Incorporate a clear perspective on the needs of persons with disabilities
  b) Seek to influence copyright and intellectual property rights discussions to ensure that literature and information are made accessible and available to persons with disabilities at the same time as to the non-disabled population at no additional cost.
  c) Develop mechanisms to overcome access barriers in developing countries such as allocating a percentage of ICT development assistance targeted for developing countries to provide ICTs for persons with disabilities.

- Encouraging Member States to develop barrier-free national ICT policies including support for the development of library services for the disabled based on accepted standards, which are inclusive of the needs of persons with disabilities and which assure the rights to freedom of information and communication of persons with disabilities.
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- Promoting the provision of ICT services and their benefits in a manner that guarantees universal, full and equitable access, taking into account the linguistic diversity of all social sectors, including the elderly and deaf persons, who use sign language and also other persons with disabilities.
- Promoting universal design and universal service regulations in the provision of telecommunication services, including recognizing diverse communication needs of persons with disabilities which may include the use of voice, text, data and video.

- Promoting the development of a global information network for exchanging, documenting and disseminating resources and best practices, and addressing the information needs of persons with disabilities.
- Ensuring that technological transitions expand the range of persons benefiting from these changes rather than marginalizing current users.
- Facilitating surveys and studies on public, corporate and voluntary initiatives, laws, policies and regulations with a view to supporting development of indicators and effective evidence-based policies for protecting and promoting the freedom of information and right to communicate of persons with disabilities.
- Encouraging and facilitating research to analyze the social and economic impact of ICTs for persons with disabilities and its relationship to other traditional and cultural practices of gathering information.

Supporting awareness-raising, capacity-building, training and education
- Supporting and promoting innovative ICT-based projects for persons with disabilities in formal, lifelong learning and training opportunities and disseminating through the media information on ICT's potential for opening new opportunities.
- Supporting projects for the development and introduction of audio assistive devices and video-telephony to secure the freedom of expression and communication by deaf and hard of hearing people, particularly from the developing countries.
- Supporting projects to develop web-based educational tools to create accessible courseware and curriculum design and disseminating these through UNESCO's networks of partners.
- Supporting the development of manuals, guidelines, and courses for families of disabled persons, teachers, library, museum and archive staff, science lab assistants and other persons to effectively use adaptive and accessible ICTs to enable full participation of persons with disabilities.
- Supporting disability organizations through initiatives focused on capacity building and advocacy for the equitable participation of persons with disabilities in the knowledge society, especially those with cognitive/intellectual and multiple disabilities.
- Providing on a priority basis, information in accessible formats in local languages to address urgent survival and development information needs such as health and disaster preparation.

- Providing training which addresses the needs of disabled persons in the career preparation phase of teaching, library and other professions working with persons with disabilities.
- Analyzing models of integrating information systems and assistive devices for education and training opportunities for persons with disabilities at all levels.
- Encouraging public media to reorient their mission to accommodate educational, scientific and cultural needs of persons with disabilities, to promote positive portrayal of disability culture and overcome stereotypes.

Implementing internal measures to support information access by the disabled
- Establishing mechanisms for recognizing outstanding contributions towards promoting equitable participation of persons with disabilities in the knowledge society.
- Ensuring that all UNESCO documents and information systems are accessible to persons with disabilities and conducting systematic audits to identify and address shortcomings.
- Mainstreaming disability concerns within its ongoing and future activities such as within the framework of its Education For All monitoring activities.
- Facilitating the production of films and television programmes documenting ICT potential in the education, training, employment and socialization of persons with disabilities.