



Fédération Internationale des Associations contre la Lèpre
International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations

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Statement from the General Secretary of ILEP on the Occasion of the 17th International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Dignity and justice for all of us is the theme of this year's International Day for Persons with Disabilities (3rd December), as well as for the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10th December).

Dignity and justice for all persons are established universal principles. These principles, along with equality and non-discrimination, are among those which make up the international human rights framework. 2008 is a significant year in the international human rights movement given the entry into force on 3rd May of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, legally binding instruments which set out the obligations of States to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In addition, in June 2008 the United Nations Human Rights Council unanimously adopted a resolution on *'The elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members'*.

The WHO Global Strategy on Leprosy (2006-2010) highlights the importance of social justice and equity and stresses that this must be integral to all aspects of leprosy work including approaches to preventing disability, stigma and discrimination.

UN conventions and resolutions promote and protect the human rights of persons with disabilities in civil, cultural, economic, political, and social life. However, all over the world, persons with disabilities, including those who have been affected by leprosy, continue to face barriers to their participation in society and are often forced to live on the margins of society. They are routinely denied basic rights such as to equal recognition before the law and the right to participate in political and public life. Many persons with disabilities are forced into institutions, a direct breach of the rights to freedom of movement and to live in the community.

Even the most enlightened of resolutions and laws are worthless unless in practice they are reflected in the way we relate to each other. So, on this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as well as during the year-long celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us use "dignity and justice for all of us" as a rallying call, as these principles are far from being realized for everyone, not least for the millions affected by leprosy.

Mr Douglas Soutar
General Secretary of ILEP