

# Press Release

**Council of Europe Press Division**

**Ref: 195a07**

**Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60**

**Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11**

**[pressunit@coe.int](mailto:pressunit@coe.int)**

**internet: [www.coe.int/press](http://www.coe.int/press)**



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## Human Rights Commissioner encourages governments to sign new UN disability convention

Strasbourg, 28.03.2007 - Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, encourages Council of Europe member states to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, when it opens for signature and ratification on 30 March. To raise awareness about the importance of this Convention, the Commissioner has made the following statement:

"Once in force, this long-awaited Convention will fill a gap in international human rights law. The treaty re-interprets our definition of human rights from a disability perspective and clarifies what governments need to do to ensure an effective observance of these rights.

As a key element of protection against discrimination, the Convention obligates states to make adjustments to meet the needs of persons with disabilities (principle of "reasonable accommodation"). The principles of "individual autonomy", "inclusion in society" and "accessibility" are also core guiding principles in the Convention.

The treaty clarifies how these can be ensured through the establishment of specific rights such as the right to make decisions on personal and legal matters (legal capacity), the right to live independently in society, the right to community-based support services and health-care and the right to inclusive education and equal work opportunities.

In addition, the Optional Protocol will allow individuals and groups to take complaints to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, once all national recourse procedures have been exhausted.

The disability movement and National Human Rights Institutions have been instrumental in the development of this Convention, and they will continue to play a crucial role to ensure an effective monitoring of its operation. Governments will also be assisted by the European Disability Action Plan – an efficient tool in the implementation process."

With questions and queries, please contact Zsafia Szilagyi, Mob: +336 6114 7037, Email: [zsafia.szilagyi@coe.int](mailto:zsafia.szilagyi@coe.int).

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