



## The Bone & Joint Decade 2000-2010 PRESS RELEASE

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### UN Agrees New Treaty to Improve Rights of People with Disabilities

11 SEPTEMBER 2006 | LUND (SWEDEN) The United Nations General Assembly has agreed on a historic new treaty which will give strengthened rights for people with disabilities around the world. In its announcement of the treaty, set to be adopted by the Assembly during its 61<sup>st</sup> Session September 2006, the UN also states its recognition of the valuable contribution of non-governmental organisations, especially organisations of people with disabilities, in the global effort to bring about full participation and equality for disabled persons and to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by these individuals.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he welcomes the agreement as a momentous achievement for the 650 million people with disabilities around the globe – roughly 10% of the world's population – and notes that people with disabilities have until now lacked adequate protection, and hopes that this long overdue Convention will mark the beginning of a new era in which they will share the same rights and opportunities as everyone.

The decision, the first new human rights treaty of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, was received with applause in the UN headquarters in New York and the Foreign Minister of Sweden, Jan Eliasson, the resigning President of the UN General Assembly said: "This move is a clear demonstration of solidarity with all the people of the world ...and a wonderful message that all persons deserve to lead a life with dignity."

The Bone and Joint Decade, an NGO focused on improving the quality of life of people affected by musculoskeletal disorders, participates in the development of programmes for people with disabilities to enable them to develop their potential to participate fully in all aspects of society. The Decade's Patient Advocacy arm ([www.bjdpals.org](http://www.bjdpals.org)) collaborates closely with the medical profession to fight against misconceptions about disabled people and actively works to increase understanding about how people with disabilities contribute to the community.

Countries which ratify the new UN treaty will promise that the legislation in their country will eject all forms of discrimination of people with disabilities, and will gradually include disability-friendly features into public buildings, transportation and the construction of new facilities; will promote and improve access to education and information; and so on.

People with disabilities have previously been marginalised in society and were barred by a wide range of physical, legal and social barriers from achieving their full potential. The UN's new treaty will require countries to guarantee freedom from negative stereotypes and prejudices, and to promote awareness of people's abilities and contribution to society.

"The treaty", says drafting Committee Chairman Don MacKay from New Zealand, "seeks to create a paradigm shift from a tendency to segregate people with disabilities to their inclusion in society. People with disabilities perform, live and contribute much better, if they are actually included in the community."

The text of the UN draft treaty can be found at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable> and the UN press statement is at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sgsm10609.doc.htm>

Launched in January 2000, **The Bone and Joint Decade 2000 - 2010** is an NGO, headquartered in Sweden, comprised of National Action Networks in 60 countries and with the support of more than 750 related organisations globally. Its mission is to advance understanding of musculoskeletal disorders (i.e. arthritis, rheumatism, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, trauma injury or disease) worldwide through research and to improve the quality of life for those affected. The Bone and Joint Decade is supported by professional medical societies, patient advocacy groups, governments, industry and researchers who are united with the goal of advancing

knowledge in the field and bringing about policy change. The Bone and Joint Decade is honoured to have the personal and active support of Kofi Annan, Secretary-General at the UN, the WHO and the World Bank. For more information, see [www.bjdonline.org](http://www.bjdonline.org).

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