

Towards disability and development: A Report of the Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation

The United Nations convenes a High-level Meeting (UNHLM) on various subjects before the UN General Assembly every year. The UNHLM this year in New York will be held September, 23, 2013 with the theme, 'Disability and Development'.

There are many UN conventions, statements and other internationally agreed development goals, but few of them mention disabilities and their specific needs. This is true also for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Within the UN, there has already begun a discussion about their development agenda towards 2015 and beyond. Without a doubt, we strongly believe that persons with disabilities should be recognized in all aspects of these discussions.

To prepare for the 2013 UNHLM, regional consultations are being organized in Africa, Europe, South America and in the Asia-Pacific Region. Consultations in the Asia-

Pacific Region convened 15-16 May 2013 at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand, with the theme 'The Way Forward: Asia-Pacific Regional Consultation on a Disability-Inclusive Development Agenda towards 2015 and Beyond'. The outcome of this consultation will be presented to UNHLM September 23, 2013. I am happy to report about the recent consultation meeting.

The Asia-Pacific regional consultation process consisted of senior representatives from governments, disabled people's organizations, civil social organizations (CSO) and other international organizations from the region. The World Federation of the Deafblind (WFDb) was officially invited to this meeting as one of the CSOs. Shinichiro Kadokawa from Japan (SMILE) was present as the official WFDb representative from Asia.

The objectives of this consultation were two-fold: first to provide an

opportunity for the Asia-Pacific governments and relevant stakeholders to exchange views on disability-inclusive developments; second, compile these regional inputs for inclusion in the draft outcome document to be presented at the September UNHLM. This consultation process was organized by the Royal Thai Government, in cooperation with the Australian Government, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the World Bank.

The Consultation Process

On the first day of the Consultation meeting, the group discussed the working report called the 'Draft Bangkok Vision' which was prepared by the Secretary for ESCAP and received in advance by all participants. The draft vision became the focus of discussion by all the participants, WFDb and World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) during the first day.

First, it is necessary to point out that all the participants had an opportunity to speak at this meeting, but the right to vote on the final wording is only carried by senior representatives from the governments. It was very important for individual participants with disabilities not only to appeal for their



Shin (middle) and Akemi (right)