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Women with Disabilities demand changes at the United Nations!

September 21, 2012 (Montreal) - The DisAbled Women's Network / Réseau d'action de femmes handicapées (DAWN-RAFH Canada) and an international adhoc coalition of women with disabilities made key interventions at the **United Nations Conference of State Parties on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, to ensure that the issues of women with disabilities become a priority.

DAWN-RAFH Canada was one of several hundred NGOs that participated in the Fifth Session of the Conference of State Parties (CoSP5) on the CRPD, which was held earlier this month at the UN headquarters in New York. The theme of this session was "Making the CRPD count for Women and Children"

"According to the World Health Organization, there are more than a billion people with disabilities around the world, with women in the majority - that makes us the largest minority group in the world," says Bonnie Brayton National Executive Director DAWN-RAFH Canada."

DAWN-RAFH Canada, and their international allies wanted to ensure that the issues of women with disabilities become a cross cutting theme at every level of monitoring and implementation of the CRPD.

"The CRPD is **our** convention", Brayton said, "and we were not willing to allow this to be yet another place where we are treated as a side-show. – There was a real risk that that might have happened if we did not take strong action at this Conference (CoSP 5)."

During the four-day session, women delegates self-organized, drafted and agreed on a Statement which is aimed at ensuring that women with disabilities become a permanent focus and cross-cutting theme at future UN CoSP sessions. Further, they used their knowledge of UN procedures and their alliances to have the Statement read into the official record of the proceeding. "That it was read by the Special Rapporteur on Disability, Mr. Shuaib Chalklen is also significant, and to have accomplished that within a few days and with no pre-conference planning is an extraordinary accomplishment," Brayton said.

DAWN-RAFH Canada's attendance at the event represented an historic moment for Canadian women with disabilities, and allowed them to meet and strategize with their international counterparts to put pressure on governments globally to meet their CRPD obligations.

Brayton stated that in order for the Statement to have lasting impact, it must be adopted as a Resolution. “The Convention itself makes it clear under several articles that there must be on-going focus on women’s issues, but we still live in a world where women’s equality is a goal and not a given. We will continue to put pressure on the CRPD Committee, which monitors implementation, as well as on UN Women and the Commission on the Status of Women, as the commitments of the latter to women with disabilities have been weak and do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the depth of the problem.

That we were able to reach consensus so quickly as an adhoc group, speaks to the fact that women with disabilities are very clear on what needs to happen next.” Brayton stated. “This is the basis of our call to action.”

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted by the General Assembly in December 2006 and came into force in May 2008. Canada signed the Convention in 2007 and ratified it in March 2010, but has yet to sign the Optional Protocol which gives individuals or groups the right to bring a substantiated complaint to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Signatories meet regularly in a Conference of States Parties in order to consider the implementation of the Convention.

Established in 1986, DAWN-RAFH Canada is a national, feminist, cross-disability organization that represents the issues of Canadian women and girls with disabilities.

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