



H. E. Alpha Konare,  
Chairman  
African Union

2 October 2007

Your Excellency,

**Subject: The EU-Africa Strategy – working to support the rights and needs of persons with disabilities living in chronic poverty**

I write to you in my capacity as Chief Executive Officer of the Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities.

We are aware that the African Union is, at this time, in dialogue and working with the European Union in the drawing up of an EU-Africa Strategy; a document which will shape and determine the future policy priorities of the EU-Africa partnership and which will develop and advance structures to reinforce this partnership.

In view of the considerable significance of this new Strategic framework, we consider it extremely important that the Strategy works actively to address the vicious and perpetual cycle of poverty and disability – empowering persons with disabilities in chronic poverty to break out of the poverty trap and, at the same time, working to reduce the prevalence of disabling conditions which persons in chronic poverty experience.

As you are aware, the African Union has given clear political support for these objectives in its support of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. On the 3 of December 1999 the OAU (known as the AU today) declared the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (1999-2009). A Continental Plan of Action was drawn up in Addis Ababa in 2002 which serves as a guideline for Member States in their formulation of their national programmes on disability issues. This Continental Plan of Action has put in place mechanisms for the implementation of the Decade's objectives.

In 2003 the Secretariat for the Decade of Persons with Disabilities was established by the South African Government, African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) and a number of continental disability organizations. The Secretariat's mandate is to facilitate the Continental Plan of Action for people with disabilities for the disability decade. The mission of the Secretariat of the African Decade is to empower Governments, Disability Steering Committees, disabled peoples organizations and development organizations to work in partnership to include disability and persons with disabilities into policies and programs in all sectors of society in Africa.

According to the WHO and the World Bank, people with disabilities constitute at least 10% of the population. Due to conflicts a large proportion of people with disabilities are found in the African continents a total would be 60 million people. People with disabilities belong to the poorest segment in every society, facing daily exclusion and discrimination. On average less than 2% of people with disabilities have basic schooling and no real opportunities for rehabilitation exist. Consequently people with disabilities are barred from the formal job market in particular, but also from the informal job market.)

The Disability Movement in Africa bases its strategy on the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which many African Governments have signed, as well as European countries supporting African Governments. Therefore, we hope to see a renewal of commitment to redress the inequalities that people with disability face on our continent.

It is for this reason that we call upon the African Union at this point to ensure that disability is taken fully into consideration in the present development of the Joint EU-Africa Strategy and that representative organizations of persons with disabilities are included in the ongoing dialogue taking place in preparation of the Strategy, as well as in the process of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of actions.

In particular we request that:

1. In the text of the Joint EU Africa Strategy itself, there is specific reference given to disability as a 'key development area', to demonstrate the political commitment of both partners to address disability.
2. The Actions which will emerge from the Strategy must include targeted actions to redress the inequalities faced by persons with disabilities.
3. The new institutional framework should include an inclusive civil society representation that ensures that the groups of society most affected by poverty are represented/included in all the processes undertaken. At African level, the institutional framework should ensure full participation and empowerment of all categories of people with disabilities [and the involvement of representative disability NGOs] as spelt out in the Continental Action Plan. The institutional framework should provide for a structure of formal dialogue with the Secretariat of the African Decade, which is implementing the programmes [and work plan] of the Decade in cooperation with the African Governments with the main objective to enhance the quality of life of all persons with disabilities in Africa.

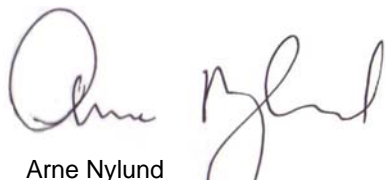
On the basis of the draft strategy endorsed in May this year by the Ministerial Troika we have prepared an appropriate amendments corresponding to these three points; you will find the amendments hereunder in Annex 1.

We as the Secretariat have expressed our views on this strategy during the period of on-line consultation in February this year, in a position posted under 'Key development Issues'.

<http://europafrika.org/2007/01/01/about-the-eu-africa-consultation-web-site/>

We would be proud to see the African Union taking the lead in ensuring that the EU Africa Strategy, its Action Plans, and the Institutional Framework all serve to reinforce commitments to human rights, including the rights of people with disabilities. We are willing to contribute our expertise into the development of new EU Africa partnership, which renews the relationship between our two continents and ensures that the development of our continent will be inclusive of the most excluded groups.

Yours sincerely



Arne Nylund  
Operations Manager, SADPD

For



AK Dube,  
CEO, SADPD

## Amendment 1

### IV. STRATEGIES, ACTORS, IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS

#### d) Key Development Issues

##### Human and social development

- Provide long-term predictable funding for national education plans to help ensure that every child attends school, including through the Education for All Fast Track Initiative and the African Education for All Initiative. **Particular attention will be given to the inclusion of hard-to-reach children, including children with disabilities.**

##### ***Justification:***

*This amendment is consistent with the priorities as set out in MDG 2 on Education for All and the European Commission priorities elaborated in the Investing in People Strategy Paper 2007-2013 on education. In respect of children with disabilities, according to the Global Monitoring Report, 2007, one third of children who are out of school have a disability. Universal primary education will never be achieved if there is no commitment and investment made in education of children with disabilities.*

## Amendment 2

### IV. STRATEGIES, ACTORS, IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS

#### d) Key Development Issues

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- Achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015 as set out by the International Conference on Development and Population (ICDP).
- **Ensure that all policies, especially regarding access to social services, notably health and education services, meet the needs of, are fully inclusive of and accessible to all women and children and vulnerable groups as well as to persons with disabilities.**

##### ***Justification:***

To clarify the meaning of the paragraph and to highlight that, in addition, women, children and other vulnerable groups including people with disabilities are particularly excluded from access to social services. That additional funds and more effective disbursement of funds to social services is required to reach out more effectively to the most marginalised groups who have limited or no access to social services. In the case of persons with disabilities, 80% of whom live in developing countries, less than five per cent have access to rehabilitation services according to WHO.<sup>1</sup>

## Amendment 3

### IV. STRATEGIES, ACTORS, IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP MECHANISMS

#### 3. Implementation and Follow-up Mechanisms

The Joint Strategy will be implemented through successive Action Plans which build on the operational part of this Strategy. Relevant programmes, projects and activities will be identified and implemented.

The implementation of this new Joint Strategy also calls for a broadened and intensified dialogue encompassing a larger number of actors, including experts, senior officials, parliamentarians, ministers and Heads of State and Government, meeting at the highest political level, as well as non-state actors, regional organisations and other stakeholders. **Particular effort will be made to systematically involve civil society organisations representing marginalised**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/ncd/disability/index.htm>

**and excluded groups, also at local level, in the process of decision-making and in the follow-up implementation of the new Joint Strategy and Action Plan; to include non-state actors representing women, children, indigenous persons, persons with HIV/AIDS, elderly persons and persons with disabilities.**

In view of the ambitions of the new partnership, as outlined in this Joint Strategy, the various dialogue levels should be articulated in an appropriate way, which will allow partners to address new issues of mutual concern and common interest for the EU and Africa.....

***Justification***

Marginalised and excluded groups find it particularly difficult to participate in decision making processes due to limited capacity and their experience of direct and indirect barriers to participation (such as inaccessible meeting venues faced by persons with disabilities). Extra effort is, therefore, required to involve such groups in the follow-up and implementation of the Joint Strategy decisions.