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Forty-second session
Agenda item 5 (a)

ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

- (a) MEASURES TO COMBAT RACISM AND RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND THE
ROLE OF THE SUB-COMMISSION

Written statement submitted by Disabled Peoples' International,
a non-governmental organization in consultative status
(category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution
1296 (XLIV).

[1 August 1990]

1. Disabled Peoples' International has raised the human rights dimension
of the crime of apartheid in many of its written and oral statements. We are
particularly pleased that the topic of apartheid and disability was included
in the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for human rights and disability and
anticipate that the topic will receive thorough attention by the rapporteur.
At this time we wish to submit some additional comments on apartheid and
disability.

2. Popi Buthelezi last walked on 16 June 1976, the day students in the
black township of Soweto peacefully demonstrated against inferior education.
She was 17. As she stated "That evening after the march I was walking to my
aunt's house to collect my books when I was shot in the back between the
shoulder blades". Three days later she regained consciousness in a ward in
Soweto's Baraqwanath Hospital, where she remained for eight months with seven
other students also disabled after being shot.

3. Apartheid, a crime against humanity, is resulting in an increasing number of black disabled people - a number far out of proportion to incidence of disability among the white community. In addition to people beaten or gunned down who survive disabled, crowded townships, unemployment and poverty foster disabling diseases like typhoid and polio which have been all but eliminated in the white population. Black workers do the bulk of unskilled work which carries with it the highest risk of injury in the mines and factories. The crowded, segregated black hospitals cannot provide the necessary care for disabled people no matter how courageous and dedicated the staff

4. Medical professionals estimate that many of those with spinal injuries will not live longer than four years in the segregated black townships and rural areas. Black persons with paraplegia and quadriplegia die from kidney failure as a result of infection, or they are killed by septicaemia resulting from skin ulcers - almost unheard of among the white disabled population.

5. Bad as the hospitals are, some persons with disability purposefully injure themselves so that they will not be returned to the townships where conditions are even worse.

6. Disabled Peoples' International welcomes the efforts made by our sister organization the Disabled People of South Africa (DPSA), a non-racial, apolitical disability rights organization providing a voice not only for the disabled people but for all those who seek to end the divisions and conflicts that infect South Africa.

7. On 10 April 1990, DPSA organized a demonstration in Soweto, which brought together more than 250 disabled peoples from all over South Africa. William Rowland, co-Chair of DPSA, estimates 12,000 to 14,000 people have been disabled by apartheid and violence in the past several years alone. Friday Mavuso, DPSA co-Chair, stated: "We are the victims, the end result of violence. Do we really want a South Africa full of disabled people". Many demonstrators carried placards reading "Shot in 1976".

8. A recent DPSA statement stresses "the conditions of poverty and unequal opportunity arise from disadvantages which are economic, social, and political. We believe that this situation has been created by the policy of apartheid which includes unequal pensions, unequal education and unequal hospital facilities. Until this changes, our people will remain handicapped." A statement issued on 5 April 1990 points out: "To be disabled in South Africa is a terrible fate. For the vast majority it means a life of poverty and isolation, facing discrimination on all fronts. The few support services which exist for disabled people are hopelessly overburdened and already have little to offer the majority of disabled people. There is nothing for those now being disabled by the violence. DPSA therefore joins in the calls by political leaders for an immediate end to the violence by all parties. We especially condemn the use of excessive methods of crowd control by the security forces."

9. Disabled Peoples' International renews its commitment to full freedom, full service and full participation for all members of South African society. International Chair, Mr. Joshua Malinqa (Zimbabwe), stresses that the fight against racism is part of all areas of disability rights and that social

justice "must permeate throughout the whole of society". Joining the nearly 100 DPI national organizations in the fight against racism and full rights for all persons with disability are our new Executive Director Henry Enns (Canada) and eight new member organizations in several categories: Personnes Handicapées de l'Algerie, Union des Personnes Handicapées du Burundi, China Disabled Persons' Federation, COCEMFE of Spain, Lega Nazionale per il Diritto al Davoia degli Handicappati of Italy, Society of Abilities for the Physically Handicapped of Uganda, Association Guinée des Sourds and Groupement pour l'Insertion des Personnes Handicapées Physiques of France.
