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Day One closing speeches, 25th October, RI World Congress

CHAIR: Welcome back everybody. Thank you very much indeed. It's not bad for us Brits, 6 minutes late, is it?

We are between a few speeches and a glass of wine, those of you that enjoy wine or something soft, if you prefer.

There is a slight change in the running order, apologies, but Penny Mordaunt, the Minister of State for Disabled People, needs to catch the plane home.

So, the way it will work: we'll have speakers up one by one to give an approximate 10-minute talk about what they are doing in their particular countries; there won't really be an opportunity for questions and answers because when we all go through the VIP reception – to which, by the way everybody is invited, yes you are all very important people - then you will get a chance to chat with folk through in the other room. So let us take that opportunity for questions.

Without further ado it's a great pleasure to introduce Penny Mordaunt. I have known Penny for a number of years, and we sat quite controversially on a system called related dying. I know from my perspective, at least, it caused some animosity and I think it's best to be inside the tent debating these things. That is where Penny and I met, and 15 weeks ago she became the Minister for Disabled People in the United Kingdom.

Penny would you join me on the stage, please, (Applause)

PENNY MORDAUNT: Thank you. 123 years ago, a nation before it was a nation, decided to give all of its female citizens a right to vote. 74 years later, the last European nation to follow suit did so and last year the last nations on earth introduced that change for the first time.

Today the Vatican City is the last bastion of the last male franchise; 123 years and counting between the first and the last. Historically, such ideas and concepts have taken time to take hold. Such rights, even when established and accepted, even when enshrined in international law, take time to appear in reality and the freedom they safeguard; the freedom for every human being to reach their full potential is fragile.

So like a cart without a horse, those ideas, those Human Rights, and that freedom alone, is inadequate. They need defending. They need enabling. They need advancing. So when we talk of disabled people's rights, we must talk about the "How" as well as the "What"; not just protection but empowerment; not just expectation, but delivery; not just aspiration, but opportunity.

Today we have an unprecedented opportunity. In developing nations, the collective financial purchasing power of disabled people is immense: around the world their talents are compelling; they are not the most entrepreneurial people on earth; they are the most relevant individuals to Governments around the globe with productivity, prosperity, competitiveness, and their commonality, and their community across nations is unparalleled.

In the UK, the combined spending power of disabled households is over £200 billion and closing the UK's disability employment gap would boost our economy by £35 billion. Over a quarter of the UK's new employment allowance scheme last year went to disabled entrepreneurs and across developed nations 14% of disabled, economically engaged people, are self employed or business owners double the number of non-disabled.

The world is more interconnected than ever before. The Channel 4, "Yes I can" video was watched by every nation on earth. We are wealthier, healthier and, believe it or not, the world is more peaceful. Yet against those opportunities, and socio-economic power that community has in developed nations, we still have an aching gap between the theory and the practice.

In the UK we have the Equalities Act and we have anti-discrimination legislation, and we spend way above the OECD average in support, and yet we have poor planning, we have poor design, we have poor build and poor enforcement which means accessibility falls far short. If you are a wheelchair user, living in a rural area, you would have to let 10 taxis pass by before one came along you were able to use and you may be charged a premium for your trouble. If you are fortunate enough to support one of the handful of football clubs which has an accessible stadium and a changing places loo, you may still not enjoy the game with your mates.

The disability employment rate lags at 33% beyond the general population. Still we fail to recognise and report Disability Hate Crime. People have to put up with one size fits all, yet equipment and services often designed and run by disabled people, which have the power to transform quality of life, care and provision, are often stifled by a local government bureaucracy. There is a dearth in products and services in the public and private sectors. Scope's Commission shows that disabled people are being short-changed by the energy and insurance markets.

Elsewhere in the world, these challenges look trivial.

I recognise much has been done but there is still so much to do. So why has progress not been quicker? Why are things slow to take off and what needs to happen to make the change and give the momentum we need to make rights a reality in experience?

This Conference has discussed many necessary solutions but I would point to the failure of societies to recognise three simple truths: firstly that it matters to us all. The immense human cost, potential wasted, opportunities denied, and the costs to Government, and that people are not able to contribute to their society, higher welfare care and health costs, and lost tax revenue, and the cost to business: a neglected customer base and growth stifled and skill and talent beyond reach.

For all our nations to reach their full potential, every one of our citizens must also reach theirs.

Secondly, we must recognise that this can be done. In the UK we are educating future designers including inclusion and accessibility in mainstream education. Housed at the 2012 Queen Olympic Park we have launched a global disability innovation hub to show good practice and design across many sectors around the world. All our nations have a new sophisticated approach to international development, based on empowerment and economic development.

In the UK we are producing a Green Paper very shortly; a joint paper between work and health to ensure that support and interventions are there when they are needed, and in my tenure in this post I will empower disabled people as consumers. My focus will be to give them the tool to lever their economic power and business. The gumption missing out on customers and talent is just dumb.

We will radically revolutionise the information accessible to the public on accessibility and building with organisations such as the guide by Euan today and develop a culture where everybody has a responsibility to push and report to and vote with their wallets. We must find a better way to enforce the Equalities Act than to require a person to challenge that business or sue them, which is quite an obligation if you are just after a pizza for your tea. And, where further legislation is required, we'll introduce it. We must increase political participation: the number of disabled people in leadership roles in business, and in civil society, and we need to identify leadership in each sector in employment and to act as consumer champions, and we need to turbo charge the efforts of entrepreneurs who get both the opportunity and the social imperative.

Third and finally, it requires all of us to help, not just including business, but especially business.

The reach of Governments and international bodies is limited.

The British Council has about 100 officers Worldwide, and that is dwarfed by the Confucius Institute that has ambitions of a global footprint where by at 2020 to consider and contrast those giants of soft power projection with just one UK business: Marks and Spencer, where, with its 1300 stores in 40 nations, we need it to export more than just marmalade and knickers. Marks and Spencers recognised with the help of

public pressure and smart management that it ought to be extending its product range to cater for certain unmet needs: easy change clothing for older children. They are also recognising the importance and value of disabled people in their workforce. Their power to influence and demand similar standards from their suppliers is considerable. It's absolutely in business interest to progress this agenda, and many UK companies are, and many companies in your own countries are too.

So Government will take a more consumer approach to disability, empowering customer through information, choice and consumerism, and look at expertise and support, and from a disability confidence scheme we will launch shortly to a one stop shop for expertise and advice.

It's time we harness the power disabled people have to create a virtuous circle of more financial independence and the choices that come with it, and competition between businesses, to meet those rising expectations.

I would suggest that it might not have taken 123 years for the concept of woman suffrage to catch on if women at the time had had a greater share of the economic, social, industrial and political power.

Let us recognise the same is true for this agenda.

Thank you.

(Applause)

CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed, Minister.

Our second speaker is Verena Bentele sorry - we only met about an hour ago was it? I think we bumped into each other in the hotel but say no more.

Verena is the Federal Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities from Germany and has a pretty good track record if you look at your biography in the programme.

VERENA BENTELE: Yes, (German) thank you - sorry that was in German.

It's a big pleasure for me to be here. "Inclusion moves". This is the motto of my term in the office of the Federal's Government's Commissioner for Matters relating to Disabled Persons. "Movement" stands for the momentum and the inclusion process needs, the vigour that the inclusion process needs in order to manage the participation for everyone. And, ladies and gentlemen, I plan to take the Scottish national animal, the unicorn, with me to Germany because I think, at the moment, and all the Germans know that, that animal will help me in my work at home.

I will be taking with me very worthwhile information and experiences you have shared, and I'm therefore very happy to be here and have the possibility to talk to you at this conference. Ladies and gentlemen, in recent years, a lot has set into motion in Germany for and with persons with disability. I would like to report what has occurred in Germany in the last several years, and I would also like to report a little bit about the future. Because that's what we are here for and what we are talking about. -the-the ninth book

of the German Social Code went into force in 2001. With the Social Code for the Rehabilitation and the participation for people with disabilities, Germany's law-makers wanted to effect a shift away from externally [sneezes] welfare to self-determination and participation. In Germany, benefits are provided from very different agencies, and institutions. In light of this, the German law makers wanted to consolidate this law, and make things for persons with disabilities a little bit easier. And, with that Code so far, let me be honest, we're not where we want to stand right now, and there's still a lot to do at the moment. But, to be honest, ladies and gentlemen, in Germany, persons with disabilities have had interesting things in the last year, and I want to talk about that as well.

One very important step was in 2009 where Germany ratified the convention on the right of persons with disabilities. All levels of government are responsible for its implementation. And, in a federal state, this is very important for being able to deal with all relevant areas for persons with disabilities, in particular, for example, the very important area of school and education in Germany, is completely and exclusively in the hands of the federal states. A national action plan was adopted in 2011, and this was updated in June this year. This National Action Plan was in its update, and in its first form in 2011 very important for the implementation on the rights of persons with disabilities in every area, and for every sector in Germany. And it was also decided this year to improve existing legislation for improving opportunities for people with disabilities. This legislation, the Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was originally adopted in 2002 with the aim of improving the integration for persons with disabilities as increasing accessibility in Germany's federal administration. We are, I would like to explain a few important points we were making in the updates this year. One key change is very important for me. It is improved accessibility in Germany's federal administrative authorities in the area of technique and information.

And, further, federal authorities must additionally provide for information for persons with mental or psychological disabilities in plain language.

That will be started in 2018. And, they must also explain notifications in plain language, and that is a very big success for the persons with disabilities in Germany.

A federal accessibility office was set up, and this office has the task to advisory and assist the German federal authorities into accessibility, and this is very good for us, and it has allowed as well to assist private business, and in an accessibility term. And an arbitration port was established as part of my remit of the federal commissioners relating to this matters for disabled person, and this offers a free law, therefore means of - sorry Settling, okay. Settling disputes go and accordance with the act on opportunities. For me, that is a very interesting task as a commissioner, and I'm very pleased that we started the work for that arbitration court some weeks ago. In my opinion, we in Germany are very, very

cautious when it comes to implementing more obligation on the private sector - that is one of the biggest problems; in my eyes, we have in our country.

Here, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, we see that, for the economics, it is not a big fault, and it's let me say much better for the business, and for persons with disability, if discrimination is avoided in the private sector. And, so for me, in my work, for the next month or perhaps years - you never know - that would be one of the big focuses of my work. And now, ladies and gentlemen, we have reached the present, and the future. The most important project for persons with disabilities in this year's legislation is the draft federal participation act, which is currently in the legislative process. So that is why we in Germany have to borrow the unicorn for a while! This act will replace the system of providing welfare with the principle of self-determination, and to be very honest, it's a very hard way.

The rights for persons with disabilities we can read out in the German constitution and in the UNCRPD. And, if we get a good legislation, a good participation act, they have to happen a lot in the next weeks. This legislation is needed because people with disabilities in Germany are not always in the position to decide where they want to live or who should give them their support. Not always receiving the rehabilitation or aid, they would need for full and effective participation. And the new bill - and that's a very good thing - provides for the persons with disabilities helps to come from the sheltered workshops into the labour work market, and that is a very hard problem in Germany, and a very interesting Pacific. The implementation of Article 27 I hope with that law will come a little bit closer to that. Ladies and gentlemen, in Germany, I think we have one very big problem perhaps we will talk about here in that conference in your countries the same thing. We have more and more people with psychological disabilities or psychological illness, and, for those persons, very early rehabilitation and prevention is very important for saving their capacities, and for making possible for that person being part of the working market. In closing, I would like to say some words to my role, and to that what I'm willing to do in the next weeks. In the next weeks in the legislative process, for me, it's very important to talk to the German parliament during that process because we need a lot of change, in that participation law. It's my role, as a commissioner, to bring the positions of persons with disabilities to our German government. And now, last but not least, let me talk about the subject of rehabilitation a little bit in Germany. Germany has the highly ramified rehabilitation system with a long tradition. People in a wide variety of circumstances can make a rehabilitation process. There's a medical rehabilitation services, they are provided as well as services for integration into work market or in social integration. The services are provided with a high level of quality - I can say that. Many measures are for specialised groups - for example, children. But I think one very important thing is that we need to make the persons who need their rehabilitation to partners, to make them to give them the possibility to decide which measure is fitting and where it should take place. To give persons with disability that choice is one important key to self-determined living. Only four

per cent persons with disabilities in Germany have their disability from birth. All the other 96 per cent they become disabled in their life. So, for a society that is getting older and older, for me, it's a very big decision what we want to have 'n' for an investment for persons with disability, and it's an important decision if we want to give people with the disability the opportunity to be an active part to - yes, make their life more self-determined.

One last thing we have in Germany, in the new legislation very important stops gone for persons with disabilities, so, for example, we have policy-making active politics from and for persons with disabilities, a forum, and I think that's an important step to make empowerment with the persons to take their own lives into their own hands. For me, ladies and gentlemen, this conference here is a very interesting place to take new ideas and new perspectives home to Germany, and so, let me say thank you at the end for your attention, and thank you for a lot of points of view, and a lot of new ideas we can take with us to Germany to make Angela Merkel's life a little bit harder! Thank you! [APPLAUSE].

CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed and good luck with the new legislation.

You will be a powerful advocate for it, I am very sure.

Next it's a real pleasure to introduce Mr Jia Yong, the Vice-President of Chinese Disabled Person's Federation.

As he comes up to the stage to explain, he'll be giving his speech in his native language but we have had it translated so it will become visible on the screen for you to read.

I know there are some blind people in the audience and I would request that you accept my apologies for not making it fully accessible to you. But if you could kindly ask somebody who is supporting you or sat next to you to support them to read the script as we go through.

Mr Jia Yong, thank you (Applause).

Sorry we need to pass the clicker button to one of the translators.

Can the translator hold their hand up, please? (Repeated) Who can speak English and Chinese? Okay, go ahead, sorry about that.

Jia Yong: ---- (Applause)

CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed. It's a massive challenge when you look ahead to what needs to be done and we wish you every success and help along the way.

Next it's a delight to introduce Stephen Sui to you. He is the Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare in the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Stephen, if you come and join us on stage, thank you.

(Applause).

STEPHEN SUI: Distinguished speakers and guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you here, at the World Congress. I feel honoured and privileged to address this high-powered global Congress and meeting with so many leaders and stakeholders in the field of rehabilitation. In support of the theme of this Congress to create an inclusive world, I purposefully wear this purple tie I got a few years ago, during my attendance at a forum in promoting inclusion and the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. I even bought a purple scarf in Edinburgh yesterday, incidentally, and I think the purple colour, I think it blended nicely with colour scheme of this beautiful venue. So I hope my speech will also blend nicely with the theme of this Congress.

Okay, let me first congratulate the IR for putting together this world Congress in Edinburgh by assembling a large number of distinguished speakers and policy makers and researchers and advocates across many themes in the world to create a more accessible world for all.

I congratulate the Chairmanship of IR under the capable leadership, and take the opportunity to convey the warmest congratulations to the incoming President of IR and look forward to promote inclusion and improving the rights and well-being of disabilities through the enhanced international collaboration.

The IR world Congress is about removing the disabling barriers that limit the inclusion of person's with disabilities and empowering Persons with Disabilities to facilitate independent living. These are enshrined in the United Nations, for the CRPD, and the adoption of CRPD was in August 2008.

As mentioned earlier, the People's Republic of China was among the first batch of States to sign the CRPD when it was opened for signature in March 2007 and CRDP for China and including Hong Kong special administration region on August 31st 2008, and all credits goes to Hong Kong and China for signing the Conventions. Hong Kong takes the obligations under CRPD seriously; it is a watershed for Hong Kong's reputational development.

I have taken the post of Commissioner for rehabilitation for about 6.5 years since 2008, before my appointment as the Under Secretary for labour and welfare. So, the well-being of persons with disabilities is also close to my heart. Since then, through Partnership, including the rehabilitation sector, the Government, the whole Hong Kong Committee has been mobilised to step up our efforts to promote an inclusive barrier-free caring and fair society in which persons with disabilities are able to lead an independent life with dignity and equal opportunities. This is illustrated by the fact that the Hong Kong Government has been allocating increasing resources to strengthen support in services for Persons with Disabilities. The overall Government has been looking at the expenditure of these services which has increased in Hong Kong dollars which is about 2.1 US dollars, that is in billions, in 2007 and 2008, the year

before CRPD entered into force in Hong Kong to 31.1 billion Hong Kong dollars this year. And it is up by over 81% and represents about 9% of our total Government recurrent expenditure.

The concept of inclusion and CRPD, the theme of this Conference, our efforts have been guided to make specific directions mainly through providing people with disabilities with a barrier-free environment with full integration into society and empowering them. Along the strategic directions, we conceded a barrier-free environment and that employment is of paramount importance. So we should like to share our latest developments in these aspects.

On the barrier-free environment we reviewed the design manual on barrier-free access which looks at mandatory requirements for the provision of barrier-free access and facilities. And there is a request of the design manual on the construction and, where practical, to adapt beyond the design manuals. For example, a new terminal is beyond statutory requirements while another flagship project is looked at... it is to adopt best practices in universal accessibility. And to look at the accessibility of premises and public housing and connecting road facilities in Hong Kong, and where the Government has completed a comprehensive retro fitting programme costing (figure inaudible) and about 240 public housing...(inaudible)

A major project has looked at lifts and cause-ways at around 30m US dollars this year to over 129 US dollars in the next few years.

All railway stations have a lift or direct access to the station and concourses to the street level. All buses have a visual or audio announcement system. By the end of this year, they will all be low level buses which are wheelchair accessible.

Wheelchair accessible taxis have already been available in Hong Kong and we expect more will join the market.

So, in tandem, we have been expanding annually the freedom we have, and Government will subsidise bus services to 156 this year, representing an increase of over 73% and to facilitate their full integration, Persons with Disabilities are allowed to travel on public transport at (amount - inaudible) under Government subsidy, receiving a transport allowance.

We endeavour to enhance the facilities and raise awareness of disability issues.

In the regional government and departments there has been designated access co-ordinators to facilitate co-ordination of disability issues, with a respective officer, and an access officer has been appointed to handle disability issues.

So information and communication technology, ICT, will be initiated to look at adoption of ICT among people with disabilities to improve their quality of living and facilitate integration into increasing digitalised mainstream society, and we will have a better fund for better living, with initial injection of over US 64m

dollars and this will support ICT projects that aim to improve the general well-being of Persons with Disabilities.

On the second aspect requiring empowering people with disabilities: the Hong Kong Government as an employer looks at applications with people with disabilities, and candidates with disabilities are given a degree of preference to enable them to participate on equal grounds, and we provide on the job assistance for people with disabilities, for them to carry out duties and a programme for students with disabilities to enrich their exposure to getting jobs.

For legal protection: we have suitable legislation measures in place against disability discrimination in employment and we want to enhance employment support and services.

We will continue to strengthen to create job opportunities, and funding support for NGOs for setting up small enterprises to create job opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The number of employers with disabilities should not be less than 50% of the total number of employees.

Apart from this, we have implemented the work-orientation scheme under which participating employers will receive financial incentive equal to two thirds of the actual salary paid to each employee with disabilities during the first 8 months of the employment period with the monthly allowance ranging from 500 to 700 US dollars, and we subsidise employers or persons with disabilities for procuring assistive devices and carrying-out workplace modification works.

In addition, we aim to encourage employers to have a work-place guide for Persons with Disabilities and we provide counselling services for people with disabilities to help them settle in their jobs.

In taking forward these initiatives we firmly believe in stakeholders' participation and partnership. Hence, we'll continue to strengthen our collaboration we have in the sector, with non-governmental organisations, and self-help groups and people with disabilities and various sectors of the community to enshrine CRPD.

We have a strong Hong Kong delegation of over 1400 members here, with the Hong Kong Council for people with Disabilities, and that includes our joint delegation leader who is the Chairperson of the Joint Council, the Hong Kong Council Social Services and the CEOs and professional practitioners of rehabilitation NGOs and care-givers, and of course Government officials at this Conference. We are of one mind: building a fair, compassionate, cohesive society in Hong Kong. We have international co-operation on the welfare rights of people with disabilities, and to develop platform sharing.

Indeed Hong Kong has a close connection with IR. The late President was the President to 1984 and when China hosted the Conference campaign for the Asian Disabled Persons in 1988 as organised with Hong Kong with the sponsorship of the Hong Kong Government. Most recently, hosted by other Hong Kong joint council for people with disabilities, members of the Executive Committees of IR had a meeting in Hong

Kong in September last year. Also, the two doctors are Members of the Executive Committees, and have been Chair of technology and accessibility.

So, on behalf of the Hong Kong delegation, I would like to express most warmly the excellent achievements of IR in helping persons with disabilities gain access to education, rehabilitation, employment, health care, and justice for the full integration into society.

There is much Hong Kong can learn from the best practices elsewhere and this Congress provides an ideal platform for us to do so.

So it is our firm commitment to make concerted efforts to fulfil the efforts of CRPD and to look at core values, and we look forward to our close collaboration in promoting the rights and well-being of Persons with Disabilities.

I wish this Congress every success and for all participants to have a fruitful and rewarding exchange.

Thank you. (Applause).

CHAIR: Thank you very much. A very comprehensive list of activities there which I am sure we have all taken careful note of. Thank you.

Finally, it's a real pleasure to introduce the Honourable Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot from India. He is our last speaker this evening so we are going to follow a similar plan to that we adopted before in terms of the Honourable Minister giving his presentation in Hindi, and we will be provided with a written format on the screen, and again apologies to any blind or visually impaired people, but if you could assist where possible, please. Thank you. (Applause)

THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT: (Speech as transcribed to English text – displayed via main Powerpoint).

CHAIR: Thank you very much indeed for that; a fascinating insight again.

I think the status of IR is demonstrable by the fact that we have had 5 senior Government officials, ministers, etc with us this evening. In case anybody knows what it means, apparently #inclusive world, that is trending: I don't know what it means, but we are trending in Scotland.

So, why do we not trend our way along the corridor and find ourselves something to wrap around like a nice drink so to enjoy the rest of your evening. Thank you all very much indeed. (Applause).