Persons with disabilities: rights and dignity, United Nations legally binding instrument

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Elizabeth LYNNE (ELDR, UK) on the Commission communication entitled "Towards a United Nations legally binding instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities". It welcomed the UN initiative and the Commission's position regarding the possible Convention, but pointed out that the Commission had failed to provide any timetable for a future comprehensive EU directive on disabled people's rights, nor had it made any real political commitments to mainstream disabled people's rights within its development cooperation policy. MEPs stressed that the outcome of the UN process must be a legally binding Convention with an effective monitoring mechanism, similar to the six human rights conventions that have already been adopted by the UN. They also wanted to ensure that organisations of disabled people and organisations representing them were fully involved in the negotiations, in the drafting of the Convention and in the monitoring thereof. The report said that a future Convention should be based on and include such principles as: - the rights-based approach emphasising and tailoring human rights (civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural) already included in various treaties to the needs of disabled people; - acknowledgement of the need to provide for both the general and impairment-specific needs of disabled people, including those with 'hidden' disabilities; - full involvement of disabled people and relevant organisations in the establishment of national and international policies and bodies which affect them; - recognition of the fact that many disabled people are confronted with multiple discrimination on grounds of gender, race, age, etc. The committee also proposed that the future Convention specify at least the following nine categories of rights of disabled people: right to quality of life; access to employment; access to education and vocational training; right to inclusion; civil and political rights; access to financial support; access to healthcare; access to culture and leisure; and equality before the law and the right to justice.