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Phil Mulligan
Executive Director
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26/9/2012

Dear Phil,

Thank you for your letter of 24 August to my predecessor on behalf of your organisation's members and supporters about the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

The UK Government is committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, which embodies the values of fairness, freedom, responsibility and social justice. These values underpin our approach to transforming the lives of disabled people, as set out in our first report on the UK's implementation of the Convention which we submitted to the UN in November 2011.

Consideration of the effect, continued relevance and possible removal of the UK's reservations and interpretative declaration is an ongoing part of the relevant policy development and also formed part of the production of our first report.

These considerations led to the conclusion that we could remove one reservation but that the other reservations and interpretative declaration are still relevant and should not be removed.

It is common for States to enter reservations to international human rights treaties and a number of States entered reservations and declarations to this Convention at signature.

Entering reservations does not imply any lack of respect for human rights, in many cases States would not be in a position to ratify a treaty at all without entering a reservation.

Our thinking on the implementation of the Convention has been evolving this year with the development of a new strategic approach, based on the expectations of the Convention. It describes how we are working with disabled people to enable them to fulfil their potential and have opportunities to play a full role in society. On 17 September, we published two documents which set out our approach to the commitment to achieve these aims.

'Fulfilling Potential - The Discussions So Far' summarises what disabled people and their organisations have told us, highlights actions already planned and actions under way across Government showing how we are already addressing many of the issues raised. To complement this, and ensure transparency, we have published all of the written responses to the discussion document online. 'Fulfilling Potential – Next Steps' outlines our strategic narrative and areas for action. It sets out the principles that will guide our future work in supporting disabled people to realise their aspirations, promote a fair and equal society and create more inclusive communities.

In addition, an innovative aspect of the Next Steps approach will be the development of a non-Government, cross-sector disability action alliance. The alliance will be expected to work with central and local government and agencies, and to help improve policy and programme development and delivery by bringing in the expertise and experience of disabled people. We expect that it will initially look at three broad areas: early intervention and proactive approaches; increasing choice and control; and building inclusive communities.

We have developed our work on Fulfilling Potential around three themes: realising aspirations, individual control and changing attitudes and behaviours. These are relevant to all disabled people, including disabled women and young disabled people and children.

Our approach in Fulfilling Potential is one which is linked to, and demonstrated by, the powerful legacy for disabled people that will be built upon the success of the Paralympic Games in London. We have used the Paralympic Games to add momentum to existing priority policies and to deliver tangible outcomes for disabled people in the UK.

Above all, we believe that the Paralympics will have helped change perceptions about disability in the UK, and we hope, because of the huge media coverage and public interest, they will have had a world-wide impact. They provide a massive impetus on which to build, and which can help achieve the ambitions of the UN Convention.

I hope this reply is helpful to you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Esther McVey', with a long, sweeping underline.

Esther McVey MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Disabled People