DOMINICA ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES INCORPORATED (DAPD INC.)

PRESIDENT’S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Monday December 13, 2010

For the past few weeks, the international community has been commemorating and focusing on a number of events geared at creating awareness of the plight of people around the world, as it relates to their human rights, obligations, responsibilities, and fundamental freedoms.

We have had: World AIDS Day, International Day for Persons with Disabilities, Universal Human Rights Day, Day to Reject Violence Against Women, and Sixteen Days of Activism to Unite to end Violence Against Women.

In addition, the United Nations has been evaluating progress made in achieving the Millenium Development Goals.

Needless to say, all these events and commemorations impact the lives of persons with disabilities in one way or the other, and I would like through this medium to raise some of these issues as we celebrate the Christmas Season and look ahead to the New Year.

International Day for Persons with Disabilities (Friday December 3) was observed under the theme: “Keeping the Promise: Mainstreaming Disability in the Millenium Development Goals towards 2015 and beyond”.

 These goals represent the basic rights and human needs that every individual should be able to enjoy, but it is interesting to note that, when these goals were established in 2000, persons with disabilities were omitted, and having realized this deficiency, world leaders at the MDG Summit in September 2010 promised to make a commitment to improve the lives of the world’s six hundred and fifty million persons who presently live with disabilities.

In this season and spirit of giving and sharing, many persons with disabilities will be filled with joy and cheer as numerous families, groups and organisations present them with gifts, visit their homes and organise Christmas Treats. This is most commendable, but we must not lose sight of the fact, that these very persons throughout the year are sometimes neglected, abandoned, discriminated against, abused and lack the basic necessities to live a descent and meaningful life.

We know too well that society regards us as second class citizens. If it weren’t so, we would not have to constantly remind them that we have: “A Right to Life; Right to Education; Right to Health; Right to Employment; Right to a Descent Standard of Living; Right to Equal and Inclusive Services; Right to Access the Physical Environment and Public Buildings, and all other fundamental human rights that those without disabilities take for granted.

Support for persons with disabilities must go beyond delivery of radio addresses and nice speeches, expressions of sympathy, and regarding us as extra-ordinary or special people. There must be a more conserted effort made in the enactment of appropriate legislation and policies for the promotion and protection of our human rights and fundamental freedoms. In light of this, I must make another urgent appeal for the ratification and implementation of the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which came into force in 2007.

 I also urge Non State Actors to join us in our call for this ratification, since this Convention will impact the life of the entire population.

 This indeed would be a welcome gift in the coming year and we look forward to it becoming a reality.

I would also like to thank and express our Association’s profound gratitude, appreciation and indebtedness to the Government of Dominica, Corporate Citizens, Faith Based Organizations, and the countless number of groups, individuals and schools who supported us with their Time, Talent and Treasure during the year.

I make special reference here of our National Dollar Day. Donations made to date are EC $17,628.00 all raised locally.

I take this opportunity to wish all our benefactors, as well as the Executive, Staff and DAPD Members and the extended disability fraternity, a Merry, Blessed and Spirit-filled Christmas and a Productive, Prosperous and Active New Year.

Signed

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michael Murphy

President

D.A.P.D.