



## IBE approved for Special Consultative Status at the United Nations!

**IBE now has a voice in the international community! says  
*Susanne Lund, IBE President***

Today marks a special occasion in IBE's history, as we are formally recognized within the United Nations, says Susanne Lund, President of IBE, speaking on 18th May. I am very happy today as the process has been long, due to the need to meet specific criteria in order to be accepted as an NGO (Non Governmental Organization) in the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC). The IBE office and the members of the Management Group contributed a lot to make this happen and I am very grateful for their support.

### **What is Consultative Status?**

It could be described as a mutually beneficial working relationship with the United Nations, enabling us to contribute to the programs and goals of the United Nations by serving as experts, advisers and consultants to governments and to the Secretariat. From time to time there may be the opportunity to participate on an advocacy group in implementing plans of action, programmes and declarations, adopted by the United Nations.

In addition some of the approved NGO's can also propose new items on the agenda for consideration by ECOSOC and be invited to attend international conferences and special sessions called by the UN.

### **IBE collaborates with the WHO which is part of the UN; what's the difference?**

Yes, IBE is still a vital member in the valuable partnership of the WHO and ILAE in the Global Campaign Against Epilepsy aiming to highlight difficulties and possible solutions to improving life quality for people with epilepsy

worldwide. The approval of IBE in the UN differs significantly with IBE now being recognized as an NGO with special consultative status on issues that would be included in the activities of ECOSOC.

### **You initiated this issue when you became the President of IBE; why?**

When IBE applied for consultative status work was already underway within an Ad Hoc Committee on a Convention to protect the rights of the world's estimated 650 million people with disabilities. The NGOs had an important role to play in this process and as you may know the Convention was adopted in August 2006 after five years of negotiations. The Convention specifically prohibits discrimination against those with disabilities in all areas of life, including civil rights, access to justice, the right to education and health services and access to transportation. Already by 30th March of this year more than 80 states had signed the Convention.

With consultative status IBE could have played an important role as an NGO in influencing this work since we are aware that many people with epilepsy face difficulties with legislation and employment rights, etc. However, our role at this moment is to support and encourage signing and ratification of the Convention.

### **Why is the approval of IBE having consultative status important for people with epilepsy?**

I believe that every global democratic organisation realises that the huge amount of knowledge and experience gathered in the organisation will help to reinforce and strengthen the United Nations. We have something to offer to the world community. We use the, sometimes, hard earned life experiences of people with epilepsy to influence national agendas. The 50 million people living with epilepsy world wide should have a voice in a formally approved global organisation such as the United Nations. It would also be a shame for IBE not to be involved at that level.

Another important aspect of this is that we make epilepsy visible in the United Nations! When we address epilepsy within the United Nations we will create some impact. I see all this in a long-term view as a gardener sowing seeds, adding some fertilizer and water, tending them and seeing them slowly grow until eventually they are ready to harvest.

In this way we can make an even bigger contribution to improving the quality of life for those people with epilepsy worldwide, Mrs Lund ends.

## **About ECOSOC**

ECOSOC serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system.

It is responsible for promoting higher standards of living, full employment, and economic and social progress; identifying solutions to international economic, social and health problems; facilitating international cultural and

educational cooperation; and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It has the power to make or initiate studies and reports on these issues.

It also has the power to assist in the organization of major international conferences in the economic and social and related fields and to facilitate a co-ordinated follow-up to these conferences. With its broad mandate the Council's purview extends to over 70 per cent of the human and financial resources of the entire UN system.

ECOSOC was established under the United Nations Charter as the principal organ to coordinate economic, social, and related work of the 14 UN specialized agencies, 10 functional commissions and five regional commissions.

In the Millennium Declaration, Heads of State and Government decided to further strengthen ECOSOC, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the UN Charter. In carrying out its mandate, ECOSOC consults with academics, business sector representatives and more than 2,100 registered NGOs.

The Council holds a four-week substantive session each July, which alternates between New York and Geneva, organized under the High-level Segment, Coordination Segment, Operational Activities Segment, Humanitarian Affairs Segment and the General Segment. At High-level Segment national cabinet ministers and chiefs of international agencies and other high officials discuss in detail a selected theme of global significance.

A Ministerial declaration is generally adopted on the theme of the High-level Segment, which will provide policy guidance and recommendations for action.

Consultative relationships may be established with international, regional, sub regional and national non-governmental, non-profit public or voluntary organizations. An NGO affiliated to an international organization already in status may be admitted provided that they can demonstrate that their programme of work is of direct relevance to the aims and purpose of the United Nations.

To be eligible for consultative status, an NGO must have an established headquarters, a democratically adopted constitution, authority to speak for its members, a representative structure, appropriate mechanisms of accountability and democratic and transparent decision-making processes.