



Strasbourg, 3 December 2012 – [Council of Europe](#) Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland called on governments today to use Council of Europe standards to protect and empower the millions affected by disability as he marks the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

"This year's theme of removing barriers to create an inclusive and accessible society is a reminder of how much needs to be done to ensure that people with disabilities can live an independent and active life. This is not just about physical barriers such as environmental design or access to transport; it is also about removing prejudice, stigma, rejection and exclusion.

"Governments already have effective means to combat those barriers in the Council of Europe's Revised Social Charter and the 2009 recommendation on universal design. Our Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 offers specific ways in which governments can dismantle existing barriers and avoid the creation of new ones.

"This work is essential to improve lives not only for the estimated 15% of the world's population which has some form of disability, but also for their families and friends, and for the wider community. Let us move now to make this, the world's largest minority, a full part of society."