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General News

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US To Host International Conference On Global Disability Rights

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The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs will host the first EMPOWER [Conference](#) on [disability](#) inclusive diplomacy, the Department announced in a press release on Monday.

According to the release, the EMPOWER [program](#) is a series of two-way exchanges aimed at bolstering the rights of persons with [disabilities](#) around the world.

The release stressed that persons with disabilities have the same rights as non-disabled persons, and must be provided access, opportunity, inclusion, and full participation on an equal basis with others.

The conference will open on Wednesday in the George Marshall Center of the State Department. Participants include 34 disability rights advocates from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Tajikistan, and Uganda who are in the United States for one-month fellowships in cities across the country.

Special Adviser for International Disability Rights at the State Department Judith Heumann will make opening remarks at the conference. The event will feature clips from the documentary film "Lives Worth Living" followed by an open discussion with leading disability rights advocates.

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John L. Wodatch, who wrote the first federal disability rights regulations in the 1970s and helped draft the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), will participate in the open discussion.

The EMPOWER program is being conducted in partnership with U.S. administrating organizations American Councils for International [Education](#), Discovering Deaf Worlds and Global Deaf Connections.

At its conclusion in the fall of 2013, the EMPOWER program will have brought an estimated 75 foreign disability rights leaders from every geographic region to the United States for two-to-four week professional development programming, and sent approximately 60 American stakeholders abroad for reciprocal exchanges, the press release said.

by RTT Staff Writer

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