

CHENNAI DECLARATION ON MUSEUMS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The National Conference on Museums and Persons with Disabilities, “**Enabling Museums**”, organised by the Regional Museum of Natural History (RMNH) Mysore in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Science & Technology Centres (TNSTC) in Chennai during 14-16 February 2008, recommends the following, which may be called as “Chennai Declaration on Museums and Persons with Disabilities”:

- a) Recognising the Mysore Declaration on Museums and Disabled, (which was released during the National Workshop on Museum Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities organised by the Regional Museum of Natural History, Mysore during 31 January to 2 February 2007) as the first national level instrument in the field of Museum Access with reference to Persons with Disabilities (PwD).
- b) Recognising the importance of the following national level instruments related to Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
 - Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, and
 - National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006.

Recommends the following:

1. Funding agencies including the Government, shall make the provisions of the above-mentioned national instruments (relevant to the Persons with Disabilities in public spaces/ buildings) as mandatory for funding of Museums
2. All Museums in general shall undertake the following
 - 2.1. To include accessibility in the policy or mission statement,
 - 2.2. To provide barrier-free building and physical infrastructure and to organise regular Access Audits
 - 2.3. To organise regular short-term programmes (including sensitization) for museums staff regarding the special needs of Persons with Disabilities
 - 2.4. To designate a senior Museum staff as Accessibility Coordinator
3. Regarding Accessible Museum Communication:
 - 3.1. All Museums to consider Universal design the underlying principle for Museum communication/ exhibition,
 - 3.2. All Museums to make available exhibits for “touch and feel” so as to make the Museum visit an enjoyable experience.
 - 3.3. All Museums to make more interactive exhibits with audio, video and digital aids as well as touch-screen kiosks.
 - 3.4. Along with normal exhibition labels, there should be alternate forms in Braille
4. Regarding Accessible Museum Education/ Programmes:
 - 4.1. While planning for education/ programmes for Persons with Disabilities, the requirements of Visitors as well as Non-visitors shall have to be considered equally well,
 - 4.2. Regular Visitor Studies to be undertaken to understand the specific requirements of PwD,
 - 4.3. Provisions of the service of education to Persons with Disabilities by Museums to include all the four categories of educational service such as interpretation (arranging interpretive services inside the Museum), extension (extending the service to regular visitors), out-reach (organising programmes outside so as to reach out to non-visitors) and in-reach (organising new programmes inside Museum to attract non-visitors).
 - 4.4. All Museums to have at least one staff trained in sign language communication
5. Professional agencies in Museums in India (such as Museum Associations of India, Indian National Committee of the International Council of Museums etc), training institutions/ University Departments of Museology etc shall include Museum Accessibility Studies in their training programmes/ syllabi.
6. In order to undertake the above-mentioned recommendations, it is recommended to the Government of India, to establish a National Centre for Museum Access Studies (NC-MAS).

Sd/-

Signed on behalf of the participants by the
Dr. B. Venugopal, Coordinator of the National Conference
Chennai 16-01-2008