



## **ISPO Statement**

Side-event “Assistive Technology for All”  
World Health Assembly, 24 May 2016

Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

Three years ago, almost to the day, I read a statement on behalf of the International Society of Prosthetics and Orthotics - ISPO - here at the World Health Assembly to welcome the initiative of the World Health Assembly to have Disability on the Agenda. We recognised it as a *significant milestone* on the road to improving services for people with disabilities. Today, many of us understand that prosthetics & orthotics provision is *NOT an expense* – it is *an investment*.

So once again, I stand before you with NO Legs; well actually – I stand on 2 *artificial legs* or ‘*prostheses*’. As many of you know, a prosthesis replaces a missing limb whereas an orthosis – such as a knee brace - supports a body or limb to improve function. In my case, my two prostheses and a will of steel have made it possible for me to be independent, complete two university degrees, receive an honorary doctorate and establish a financial advisory business. This has enabled me to support myself financially and give something back to society by creating jobs, paying tax, and supporting other amputees to have a good life in spite of limbloss.

However, I am among a small minority of people throughout the World who *need Assistive Technology who actually get it*, and I would like others to have the same opportunity.

The GATE Initiative has been a *major step forward* in *promoting recognition* of the importance of making Assistive Technology available more broadly. WHO initiated a major Global Survey with over 10,000 responses to confirm a Priority List of 50 Assistive Products. This List is being launched at this World Health Assembly. This is a *major initial achievement* and it remains for all countries to adopt it – to make at least ALL items *on this Priority List* available to anyone who needs them in all countries in the world.

Within Prosthetics & Orthotics, WHO in collaboration with ISPO and funded by USAid, *is developing Global Standards for Prosthetic & Orthotic Services Provision* that will be launched at the ISPO World Congress in Cape Town, South Africa, in May next year. Its implementation worldwide will be a Priority in order to achieve some of the goals of the GATE Initiative.

The statistics presented at the launch of the GATE Initiative remain challenging. We are currently meeting the needs of *only about 10 % of the world's population* requiring Assistive Technology. This need is *rising* along with the increase of diseases like Obesity, Diabetes, Vascular Disease, and Trauma resulting from among other traffic and work accidents, war and terrorism, and an ageing population with increased life expectancy.

We sincerely thank WHO for the GATE Initiative and for what has been achieved to date; *but much more needs to be done* for the vision to become reality. We owe it all the people in the world. We owe it to Humanity. We owe it to ourselves. We must continue to work hard and stay focussed to achieve our vision of Global Access to Assistive Technology for all.

All Nations and their Governments should sign up to it.

It is NOT an expense. It is an investment.

Thank you for your attention (BIG SMILE)

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