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| **Title:** | Report by Cynthia Waddell, ICDRI, on M-Enabling Summit 2011: Global Conference and Showcase on Mobile Applications and Services for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities December 5-6, 2011, Washington DC, USA | |

**The M-Enabling Summit, organized by G3ict and held jointly with ITU and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), was held in Washington DC on Monday and Tuesday, December 5 and 6, 2011.**

**On Monday, December 5, the conference began on site at the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with a welcome from Ms. Karen Peltz Strauss, Deputy Bureau Chief of the Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau (CGB). The FCC CBG develops and implements FCC consumer policies, including disability access.**

**It was announced that over 365 people were attending the international summit with at least 30 countries represented in addition to several U.S. federal agencies. Axel Leblois, G3ict Executive Director and organizer of the summit, welcomed participants and introduced Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to President Obama for Disability Policy from the White House Office of Public Engagement. Kareem Dale welcomed everyone and remarked on actions taken by President Obama: first, to have the U.S. sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009; second, that the President signed the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) in 2010; and third, the President’s support of the ongoing federal rulemaking activities on accessible ICT under Section 508 and the CVAA.**

**Next, FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn welcomed everyone and spoke about how laws are passed to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to technologies and how she was looking forward to learning more from the international community and the speakers at the conference.**

**Finally, Dr. Hamadoun Tou**[**ré**](http://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/leadership.aspx) **keynoted about how ITU takes accessibility seriously and described the work of ITU and standards work in accessibility and human factors. His keynote was followed by a presentation by Karen Peltz Strauss entitled “The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act: Background, legislative development, rulemaking and application.”**

**One highlight of this extraordinary event was the international panel chaired by Dr. Hamadoun Tou**[**ré**](http://www.itu.int/en/about/Pages/leadership.aspx) **on policies and programs to promote accessible and assistive mobile services for seniors and persons with disabilities. The panel included speakers from the UN Secretariat, Canada, South Africa, India and the W3C. During his presentation, the UN Secretariat on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities pointed out that I had co-authored their UN Monograph on the ICT provisions of the Convention. Subsequently, a request was received for a copy of the paper from Jamal Mazrui, Deputy Director of the FCC’s new Accessibility and Innovation Initiative.**

**On Tuesday, December 6, the plenary opened at the Gaylord conference venue where I attended two separate panel sessions. The first was titled “Innovator’s Session- Mobile Apps and Solutions for Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and/or Speech Impaired.”  Andrea Saks was Rapporteur and her report is a separate document.**

**The second panel session where I was scheduled to participate was called, “How to Involve and Benefit from the Expertise of Persons with Disabilities in Developing Programs and Solutions.”  The Chair requested that we not provide PowerPoints but instead give introductory oral presentations and participate in a question and answer session with the audience. We all gave a presentation orally about our respective areas of work which varied greatly. Alexandra Gaspari was the exception to the “no PowerPoint rule” and was allowed to give a PowerPoint presentation on the accessibility work of ITU-T.**

**In this question and answer exchange with the audience on how to engage experts with disabilities, my comments were directed towards the need to ensure that meetings and communications are accessible for participants and how important it is to involve enough stakeholders so that the cross-disability perspective contribution can occur. In response to a comment that experts with disabilities tend to work for non-profits and are unable to pay membership fees for standards organizations and/or attend work groups due to lack of funding, I stated my appreciation to ITU for waiving membership fees for non-profit entities and for accepting our membership application into ITU. This will enable ICDRI to make contributions to the different technical ITU Study Groups so that the disability perspective can be included.**

**The other sessions offered on Tuesday at the conference that will also have Rapporteur Reports on the G3ict website were:**

* + - * Designing Accessible Mobile Websites and Accessible Mobile Apps;
* Innovator's Session - Mobile Apps and Services for Learning and Cognitive Disabilities;
* Innovator’s Session - Leading Apps and Solutions for Visually Impaired Users;
* Cloud-based Solutions for Assistive Technologies. Latest Implementations and Developments for the Workplace, e-Government, e-Health and e-Education;
* Accessible and Assistive Apps and Solutions in Emergency Response;
* Accessible and Assistive Apps and Solutions in Travel and Tourism; and
* Monetizing Mobile Applications: Which business models work for mobile apps developers? Which OS platforms and distribution channels provide the most opportunities?

**Because these 7 sessions were scheduled at the same time, it was not possible to attend all of them. However, it was particularly interesting to see the following being offered:**

* Cloud-based Solutions for Assistive Technologies. Latest Implementations and Developments for the Workplace, e-Government, e-Health and e-Education
* Accessible and Assistive Apps and Solutions in Emergency Response; and
* Accessible and Assistive Apps and Solutions in Travel and Tourism.

**There was also an exhibition of different manufacturers and details can be found on the G3ict website. There will be a link to this website from the ITU-T JCA-AHF page. The conference ended with a Plenary that included reports from the Rapporteurs and their reports will be made available on the G3ict website.**

**The next day on Wednesday, December 7th after the M-Enable conference, a workshop was held at the FCC venue entitled: “Joint FCC & G3ict International Inquiry:  Broadband Adoption and People with Disabilities.” Dr. Larry Irving gave the keynote about the Digital Divide and reminded us of the work during the Clinton administration during the building of the Internet backbone and outreach to entities seeking a web presence.**

**After the speeches, the participants split up to attend brainstorming sessions regarding accessibility with a goal to report back to the main group after lunch of any findings that were relevant. I participated in the session regarding “Outreach and Marketing to Persons with Disabilities: Best Practices and Lessons Learned.”  We then reconvened and heard reports from the sessions and identified focus areas for a white paper that is expected to be developed by G3ict. Gerry Ellis participated in this session giving a report from one of the brainstorming sessions. His report is separate.**

**Further Comments: In the session called “Innovator’s Session- Mobile Apps and Solutions for Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and/or Speech Impaired,” Hamilton and Cap Tel described an app that was intended to provide captioning for phone calls as a relay service. Since my return, I have been testing and running the app by Hamilton and CapTel to see how effective they are in providing a free real-time captioning service for my phone calls.  This app allows users to make and receive phone calls using any phone, while viewing captions of the call on the Internet browser window of the user computer or smart phone. For a number of years I have used the landline CapTel phone for this service and was curious to see the benefits of using the mobile app. One outcome has led to discussions with the developer to help them improve the application and service.**

**I also made inquiries to experts in the field regarding the American Sign Language apps that were demonstrated at the Summit. This is part of an on-going study that ICDRI has been following over the years.  This research has resulted in the conclusion that the text to sign apps and avatar features were not fully developed for two way communications especially when one person in the conversation does not sign. However, it was encouraging to see the status of the development in the field of avatars being used as sign language interpreters. It is very possible that future uses could improve communications for sign language users as the technology improves.**