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Iceland, October 2015

Mr. Dagfinn Høybråten  
Secretary-General of the Nordic Council of Ministers

Dear Mr. Høybråten,

I am writing you this letter because of both your position and your reputation among Icelanders.

Attached is a letter I received from the United Nations headquarters signed by Mrs. Amina J. Mohammed, special advisor to Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In the letter I am encouraged to do what I can to ensure that the new provisions approved by the United Nations as their strategy for the next 15 years become reality. The reason why this is directed toward me is that in recent years I have been encouraging the government and the people of Iceland to call attention to nervous system problems on an international level and the need for the nations of the world to unite in creating an international campaign to increase knowledge on how the nervous system works. I kindly ask you to read this letter and consider whether it would behove the Nordic countries to show the initiative of adopting the section of Article 26 of the United Nations' new political statement on sustainable development that applies to the nervous system (attachment 2). Should you believe so, I kindly ask you to act on its adoption. As you know, the Nordic countries already co-operate on injuries to the spinal cord, which is part of the nervous system. It would be admirable if the Nordic countries would expand their activities benefitting the nervous system and assist the United Nations in implementing the new provisions on the nervous system that the leaders of the world agreed to include in the institution's strategy. I believe it would best serve humanity if the Nordic countries appointed a special working committee for the purpose of reviewing the current research on the nervous system and linking available knowledge so as to increase the understanding on how the nervous system works. The primary barrier to finding cures for nervous system issues such as mental disorders, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, MS, MND, spinal and brain injuries, etc. is that the medical sciences do not have a full understanding of how the nervous system works. None of the issues listed above will be cured until the medical sciences increase their knowledge of the nervous system. The international field of nervous system science has a serious need for political assistance from the international community in this regard.

Just over twenty years ago, my daughter was in a car accident and became paralysed. Since then, I have closely followed developments in the international scientific field on the nervous system. I have long been convinced that the fundamental knowledge needed to better map the functions of the nervous system is already in place. For several centuries scientists have wondered about the nervous system and investigated it. Somewhere in that historical knowledge I believe there is information that may be of use. Therefore I was enormously pleased to learn that scientist Youyou Tu, one of them who won the Nobel Prize for Medical Science this year, found the fundamental information she used to develop the drug Artemisinin for malaria in a 1600-year-old transcript. That goes to show that history contains answers, and it is necessary to look to the past in order to move forward.

My name is Audur Gudjonsdottir, and I am a mother to three daughters, a wife and a grandmother. I am a trained nurse and have worked as a nurse my entire professional career. Since my daughter's accident I have been active on behalf of spinal cord injuries and the nervous system in Iceland, in the Nordic countries and globally. I campaigned for the Nordic Council's approval to make spinal cord injuries a priority matter in 2013. I was also involved in the decision to hold the meeting of specialists on spinal cord in Iceland in 2014 when Iceland chaired the Nordic Council and the Icelandic Minister of Health, Kristján Thór Júlíusson, presented to other Nordic health ministers last September. I initiated Althingi's passing of a parliamentary resolution on actions on behalf of the treatment of spinal cord injuries in 2014 (Attachment 3). I have also led an effort for the government and Icelanders to take action on behalf of the nervous system at the United Nations.

Mr. Høybråten,

In closing, I have attached Chapter 70 of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, "The Road to Dignity by 2030" as Attachment 4. In it, the Secretary-General calls for the next sustainable development goals to address nervous system disorders and injuries.

Respectfully,

Audur Gudjónsdóttir (sign)  
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