HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL AWARDED $1.5 MILLION CONRAD N. HILTON HUMANITARIAN PRIZE AT GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY FORUM

International jury selects largest NGO that aids and advocates for people with disabilities

REDWOOD CITY, CALIF. – April 13, 2011 – The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation today presented the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize of $1.5 million to Handicap International, the largest non-governmental organization providing assistance and advocacy for people with disabilities. The Hilton Foundation presents the annual award, the world’s largest humanitarian prize, to an organization that is doing extraordinary work to alleviate human suffering. Handicap International was selected for the 2011 Prize by a prestigious independent international jury.

The 2011 Hilton Prize was formally presented at a special ceremony at the Global Philanthropy Forum’s 10th annual conference at the Hotel Sofitel in Redwood City, California. Michelle Bachelet, the first Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, delivered the keynote for the prize dinner. Ms. Bachelet most recently served as President of Chile from 2006 to 2010.

“I applaud Handicap International for working tirelessly to secure equality and inclusion for people with disabilities, especially women, who for centuries have been overlooked and excluded,” said Bachelet. “And I commend the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the international jurors for selecting Handicap International for the Hilton Humanitarian Prize. This is an organization that has put people with disabilities under a global spotlight to recognize their contributions and to ensure they enjoy the same human rights as everyone else.”
Former President George H. W. Bush delivered a special video message congratulating Handicap International. Thirteen years ago, President Bush helped present the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to Doctors Without Borders. “Looking back, I believe one of the finest accomplishments of my presidency was signing the Americans with Disabilities Act,” said President Bush. “That’s why I’m pleased to recognize Handicap International for the assistance it provides to people with disabilities around the world.”

Formed in 1982 by two French doctors to help Cambodians seriously injured by landmines, Handicap International now provides crucial assistance to acutely vulnerable people around the world including those disabled from natural disasters, injury, armed conflict, disease and poverty. It currently manages 300 projects in 60 countries and has become a major first responder for persons with disabilities in emergency situations.

“In just three decades, Handicap International has transformed the way the world deals with persons with disabilities who have been overlooked and underserved, especially in emergency situations,” said Steven M. Hilton, president and CEO of the Hilton Foundation. “By dedicating its resources and talents to working with and advocating for people with disabilities, Handicap International gives help and hope to the most vulnerable among us.”

Headquartered in Lyon, France, Handicap International affiliates in France, Canada, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States formed the Handicap International Federation in 2009. The organization’s services range from clearing landmines to providing artificial limbs, psychological and economic support and training of local staff.

“Receiving the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize is a great honor and underscores our collective responsibility to serve the world’s most marginalized and vulnerable people,” said Dr. Jean-Baptiste Richardier, CEO of Handicap International and one of the original founders along with Claude Simonnot who retired from the NGO in 2004. “We will, from now on, be in a much stronger position to convince donors to include the most vulnerable from the onset of an emergency and to ensure that long-term inclusive development for all becomes the norm rather than the exception.”

Dr. Richardier said the proceeds from the prize would be used to strengthen Handicap International’s disaster preparedness capabilities and pre-deploy emergency response resources to be even better prepared for future crises. Dr. Richardier affirmed that some funds
would be set aside to ensure that Handicap International can continue to help the many thousands of Haitians who lost limbs or sustained other injuries in the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake.

Handicap International has a long history of developing model programs to serve people with disabilities and advocating for policies that address their specific needs. Current research suggests that women with disabilities comprise three quarters of all disabled people in low and middle-income countries, and that women in general are more likely than men to become disabled because of poorer working conditions, poor access to quality healthcare, and gender-based violence. Handicap International was a leading advocate for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which became international law in 2008. The organization co-founded the International Campaign to Ban Landmines that led to the adoption of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

Recognizing that people with disabilities are often forgotten in disasters, Handicap International pioneered the Disability and Vulnerability Focal Point, an all-inclusive mobile medical and service center that can be quickly set up in emergency situations where humanitarian workers can refer those suffering from disabilities and other especially vulnerable people for help.

Special events in Geneva, Switzerland, Lyon, France, and Washington, D.C. are taking place to honor Handicap International and its selection as the 2011 Hilton Prize recipient.

“The Hilton Humanitarian Prize was established in 1996 to call attention to organizations that are innovative leaders in addressing humanitarian needs throughout the world. More than 200 nominations are received every year and we hope the examples of the prize awardees will encourage others to contribute to their important work,” said Judy Miller, vice president of the Hilton Foundation and director of the Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

Footage and high-resolution photos of Handicap International’s work are available for download here:

ftp://ftp.handicap-international.fr/

User name: invite
Password: invite
Directory: Hilton Prize

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About Handicap International
Handicap International is an independent and impartial international aid organization working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster. We work alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, taking action and bearing witness in order to respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions and promote respect for their dignity and fundamental rights. For more information, please visit: www.handicap-international.org or www.handicap-international.us

About the Hilton Humanitarian Prize
The Hilton Prize jury currently includes: Princess Salimah Aga Khan, international ambassador for SOS Kinderdorf International; Catherine A. Bertini, professor of public administration, Syracuse University, and former executive director of the United Nations World Food Programme; Gro Harlem Brundtland, MPH, former director-general of the World Health Organization and former prime minister of Norway; Eric M. Hilton, director, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and son of the late Conrad Hilton; James R. Galbraith, director, Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; Olara A. Otunnu, president of LBL Foundation for Children, former UN under-secretary-general and special representative for children and armed conflict; and Professor Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize Laureate in economics and Lamont University professor at Harvard University.

The Hilton Prize Laureates are recognized leaders in the humanitarian world and include: Aravind Eye Care System (India) 2010; PATH (Washington), 2009; BRAC (Bangladesh), 2008; Tostan (Senegal), 2007; Women for Women International (Washington, DC), 2006; Partners In Health (Massachusetts), 2005; Heifer International (Arkansas), 2004; International Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (Denmark), 2003; SOS Children’s Villages (Austria), 2002; St. Christopher’s Hospice (United Kingdom), 2001; Casa Alianza (Costa Rica), 2000; African Medical and Research Foundation (Kenya), 1999; Doctors Without Borders (France), 1998; International Rescue Committee (New York), 1997; and Operation Smile (Virginia), 1996.

About the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation was created in 1944 by international business pioneer Conrad N. Hilton, who founded Hilton Hotels and left his fortune to help the world’s disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The Foundation currently conducts strategic initiatives in five priority areas: providing safe water, ending chronic homelessness, preventing substance abuse, caring for vulnerable children, and extending Conrad Hilton’s support for the work of Catholic Sisters. Following selection by an independent international jury, the Foundation annually awards the $1.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to a nonprofit organization doing extraordinary work to reduce human suffering. From its inception, the Foundation has awarded nearly $940 million in grants, distributing more than $100 million in 2010. The Foundation’s current assets are approximately $2 billion. For more information, please visit www.hiltonfoundation.org.