



at the heart of horse sport

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## **Address given at the International Paralympic Committee Press Conference**

### **HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein**

First of all I would like to say what a great honour it is to be a member of the Honorary Board of the IPC. I am passionately interested in the work of this great organisation and the principles of the Paralympic Movement are key messages from which all of us can learn and take inspiration. My fervent hope is that through this position I will be able to promote Paralympic sport on a global basis particularly in my region, the Middle East.

As I say I would like to promote all Paralympic sport but as the elected President of the international governing body of horsesport, the Fédération Equestre Internationale, known as the FEI, I would like to take this opportunity to offer you a briefing on the involvement of disabled athletes within that particular environment.

Within the FEI, disabled sport is defined as Para-Equestrian and it is the 8th and latest discipline to join the FEI family. This marriage of Para-Equestrian and the FEI only took place on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2006 and we are very proud of the fact that the FEI was the first International Sports Federation to govern and regulate both its able and disabled athletes and I am certain that this is a model that will continue to develop over the coming years.

Currently Para-Equestrian, which was started in Scandinavia in the 70's but now covers 68 nations, involves the disciplines of both Dressage and Carriage Driving with Dressage being the only Para-Equestrian discipline within the Paralympic Games – having joined the IPC family for the Atlanta Games in 1996. Twenty nine nations took part in Athens.

Outside of the Olympics there is a growing international and Championship structure with nine international Para-equestrian events in 2006 including a new model for international events 'Combined Dressage' which sees able and Para-Equestrian competitors take part in the same competition. 2010 will see horsesports multi discipline World Championships, the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in Kentucky, staging the Para-Equestrian Championships at the same time – this will be a first for the FEI and one I am particularly looking forward to.

Within the FEI, as in the IPC, we place a strong emphasis on Development and it is a main focus of both the Development and Para-Equestrian departments to increase global participation.

From the perspective of the FEI Para-Equestrian riders are world-class athletes; they are committed to their sport and overcome enormous physical and mental obstacles to compete. Our role as the FEI is to ensure that they are given venues and championships which match their commitment and provide the regulatory guidance that ensures the highest standard of competition conducted in a fair and equitable environment.

**President**  
HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein