

MEETING REPORT

Annual Meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

UN-House, Beirut, Lebanon – 7 to 8 May 2015

BACKGROUND

The tenth meeting of the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG) for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was chaired by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with support from the IASG Co-Secretariat comprising the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The meeting took place on 7 and 8 May at the UN House in Beirut, Lebanon.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS

Opening session

Ms. Gisela Nauk, ESCWA, chaired the meeting and welcomed participants. The opening remarks emphasised the high priority ESCWA places on its work related to the rights of persons with disabilities. The Chair briefly accounted for the various means through which ESCWA has endeavoured to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities in the region, and emphasised the interesting opportunities that lie ahead for inter-agency efforts, notably the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 and the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS).

Decision: The Chair noted that the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) had since the previous meeting become a member of the IASG. As no objections were raised, the IASG formally confirmed UNITAR's membership.

Discussion on the work of the CRPD Committee and its engagement with the IASG

Mr. Jorge Araya, OHCHR, informed the meeting about the 13th session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, held in Geneva from 25 March to 17 April 2015 in Geneva. Mr. Araya conveyed the Committee's commitment to continuous cooperation with the IASG. Mr. Araya also mentioned the Committee's engagement with the newly-appointed Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar. In addition, the Committee is also starting preparations for the development of reporting guidelines for the second round of submissions from States Parties on CRPD implementation.

Discussion on the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties (CoSP)

Ms. Akiko Ito, UNDESA, briefly accounted for the background of the CoSP, and thereafter informed the meeting about the 8th CoSP set to take place in New York on 9 to 11 June 2015. Its overarching theme, Ms. Ito reported, would be mainstreaming disability in the post-2015 development agenda. Two joint statements will be delivered by ESCWA as Chair of the IASG during the CoSP: one on Article 11 during the informal panel discussion (from the floor);

and the other during the UN segment. The subsequent discussion revolved around how to strengthen the dialogue between the IASG and the CoSP Bureau.

Decision: The meeting decided to produce a briefing note detailing how the IASG would like to interact with the Bureau.

Update on UNITAR training and discussion on accessible conferencing

Mr. Alex Mejia, UNITAR, presented the training course it is developing on the human rights based approach to disability, accounting for the course's objective, structure and content. Mr. Mejia thanked the IASG for the feedback provided so far, and welcomed its continued engagement in the development of the training course.

Ms. Tomoko Takeda, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) shared with the meeting its experience in organising the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Japan on 14 to 18 March 2015. UNISDR accounted for the challenges it had faced and the lessons it had learned with regard to making the conference accessible, mentioning the current absence of global guidelines relating to this. Measures taken by the UNISDR during the conference had included setting up an accessibility help-desk; ensuring the availability of accessible hotel rooms; and providing sign-language interpretation.

Decision: The meeting decided to set up an IASG Working Group on accessible conferencing.

2015 International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPwD)

Participants discussed the upcoming International Day of Persons with Disabilities, including the proposal to have an agreed IASG joint campaign including media strategy.

Decision: The meeting decided that a draft concept note (including a media strategy) should be prepared for the 2015 International Day on the theme of the post-2015 development agenda.

Discussion on the post-2015 development agenda and IASG activities to support disability-inclusive implementation

The meeting discussed the importance of conducting a mapping exercise in order get an overview of the draft indicators issued by the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), and how best to guide and inform the actors involved in the process of finalising the indicators.

Ms. Maria Martinho, UNDESA, briefed the meeting on the process aiming to develop indicators for the SDGs. Ms. Martinho gave background on the composition and upcoming meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDGs (IAEG-SDGs). Its starting point would be the pilot indicators issued by the UNSC, but it would in no way be constrained by these.

Ms. Miranda Fajerman briefed the meeting on the status of two requests made the previous year by the UN General Assembly (UNGA). The first such request was that a panel discussion take place during the 70th session to review progress made in the UN system. The timing of

this discussion was to be set by the President of the UNGA. The second request from the UNGA was that a flagship publication, taking stock of where persons with disabilities are in the development framework, be issued.

Decision: The meeting decided to: (1) explore the prospect of organizing a briefing for the Group of Friends of the CRPD; (2) draft a joint statement or letter on the issue of disability-inclusive SDG indicators; and (3) engage regularly with the CRPD Committee on this topic.

Update on the UNPRPD and roll-out of the IASG/UNDG Guidance Note in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda

Mr. Emanuele Sapienza, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), provided an overview of the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), and accounted for some of its recent undertakings and activities. UNDP explained that such activities take place mostly at the country level, but that they also have regional and global components. UNDP also related that the UNPRPD, amongst other activities, had been supporting two work-streams at the global level: one on development, and one seeking to deliver a common UN narrative on statistics relating to persons with disabilities.

Presentation on the outcomes of the Third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction

UNISDR provided a presentation about the proceedings and outcomes of the Third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction, in which 187 Member States had participated, and in the duration of which several sessions led by persons with disabilities had taken place. UNISDR illuminated provisions relating specifically to persons with disabilities of the Sendai framework, which had resulted from the conference. UNISDR also briefed participants on its present work, much of which revolved around the matter of SDG indicators.

Thematic discussion session 1: Disability-inclusive humanitarian action

Mr. Arif Khan, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), briefed the meeting on the WHS set to take place in Istanbul in May 2016. Mr. Khan explained that the Summit would be a multi-stakeholder event rather than an inter-governmental one. Regional consultations are ongoing, with a global consultation scheduled to take place in Geneva in October. Written inputs can also be provided, with a deadline of 31 July. OCHA stated that Handicap International has taken the lead on organizing consultations on persons with disabilities through a survey and two upcoming roundtable meetings.

Ms. Carol El Sayed, UNHCR, presented the situation of refugees living in Lebanon, accounting of their demographic composition and their harsh living conditions. She also stated that UNHCR's primary goal for refugees with disabilities is to make sure that their rights are met without discrimination and that they can benefit from the same protection and assistance that their families and communities benefit from. She added that sometimes this will mean adapting the forms of protection, facilities, and assistance so that everyone has equal access. She shared examples of how UNHCR Lebanon has done this: through listening to their needs and suggestions (regular consultations or participatory assessments), engaging persons with disabilities as volunteers, promoting and facilitating inclusion into community development centers and other community-based structures across the country. Good practices highlighting this have been documented together with the Women's Refugee Commission. She illuminated the fact that the challenges voiced by

refugees with disabilities in Lebanon often mirror those facing Lebanese living with disabilities. These include lack of adequate housing, limited transportation means (financial, quality of roads, public transportation), difficulties accessing education facilities and social isolation. She underlined the importance of strengthening national social protection systems for persons with disabilities, while ensuring inclusion of refugees within them.

Mr. Toufic Rizkallah, World Rehabilitation Fund (WRF), accounted for the situation of persons with disabilities in Lebanon during and in the aftermath of the country's prolonged civil war. He emphasized the changing trend in international assistance for the social welfare sectors in general and to the disability sector in particular, where funding had been deviated to other developmental needs. Mr. Rizkallah made clear in his presentation how rehabilitation of persons with disabilities is a long-term process, and that provision of such rehabilitation thus requires long-term funding. This contradicts the sporadic short-term nature of emergency assistance funds during crises, as is the case with the current Syrian refugees crisis in Lebanon, where needs of persons with disabilities among refugees and in Lebanese host communities have been overwhelming local service providers. He also emphasized that Lebanon has the needed human and technical resources for rehabilitation assistance programs, but lacks the needed financial resources.

Ms. Myroslava Tataryn, Handicap International (HI), first briefed the meeting on the organisation's background and on its activities in the Arab region. Ms. Tataryn pointed to how the situation of persons with disabilities prior to a crisis such as war tends to impact upon their situation during the crisis. She also accounted for HI's responses to the present crises in the Arab region, mentioning inclusive needs assessments; mapping of available services; and training for local service providers. Ms. Tataryn stressed the importance of capacity-building and recognised that a crisis-related increase in disability prevalence can entail an opportunity to alter societal attitudes towards persons with disabilities.

Ms. Emma Pearce, Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), informed the meeting about the WRC's focus areas, which included advocating for policy improvement; cooperating with UNHCR to include and address the needs of refugees with disabilities; identifying and promoting good practices in disability-inclusive humanitarian action; and building the capacities of organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs). Ms. Pearce in her presentation focused upon the acute problem of gender-based violence, which disproportionately affects women and girls with disabilities in crisis situations, but is often not recognized and addressed by disability and humanitarian actors in their responses. She also emphasised, amongst other things, the importance of taking into account intersecting factors and the social roles of persons with disabilities within family and community structures. Ms. Pearce stressed the need for accountability mechanisms that function above individual clusters in the humanitarian response system to ensure that disability inclusion is systematically implemented across all crises.

Thematic discussion session 2: International frameworks for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk

Mr. Vladimir Cuk, International Disability Alliance (IDA), provided some general reflections about the role of the UN system to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, mentioning the usefulness of conducting activities in New York as well as in Geneva, and of coordinating activities in the two locations; the importance of being present in national

consultations relating to the post-2015 agenda; and the potential to widen the disability caucus and enhance cooperation within it.

Ms. Rania Al-Jazairi, ESCWA, illuminated the main pillars of SC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and explained the rationale behind it having been adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter rather than under Chapter VII. She also pointed to Resolution 1325's possible impact, mentioning, for example, how it appears to have prompted countries to adopt national action plans.

Mr. Elias Diab gave a presentation on the subject of the monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) mandated under SC Resolution 1612. He touched upon matters such as the actors involved in the MRM, the types of violations covered under the MRM, and the public nature of MRM procedures. Mr. Diab cited as one important challenge the occasional nature with which MRM reports are submitted.

Ms. Jo Becker, Human Rights Watch (HRW), gave a presentation concerning SC Resolution 1625 on children and armed conflict. She underlined the importance of data and demonstrating how the matter was one of peace and security in the context of the resolution negotiations. Ms. Sarah Taylor, HRW, expounded upon certain aspects of the adoption and implementation of SC Resolution 1325. She mentioned, amongst other things, the role of the NGO working group on women in peace and security, and the Group of Friends of Women in Peace and Security chaired by Canada. Ms. Taylor also brought up the hurdles of developing indicators to facilitate implementation. Ms. Shantha Rau Barriga, HRW, shared with the meeting HRW's recent research in the Central African Republic, where the organization had gathered evidence on persons with disabilities in the context of the ongoing humanitarian crisis. She mentioned the need for guidance as to how violations of humanitarian law ought to be monitored and reported upon. Ms. Rau Barriga also underlined that references to persons with disabilities have been included in four recent Security Council resolutions (including resolutions on MONUSCO and MINUSMA).

There was a general agreement in the meeting to explore opportunities to support the inclusion of language on persons with disabilities in existing mechanisms, including SC resolutions on the protection of civilians and on children and armed conflict. The discussion also reverted to the issue of how best to utilise the WHS, with it being suggested that the Summit could be a platform conducive to the cause of strengthening the rights of persons with disabilities.

Decision: The meeting decided that the Working Group on Article 11 should draft a common statement for the WHS to be submitted prior to 31 July. The meeting also decided that the Working Group should discuss and develop other future avenues for promoting disability-inclusive humanitarian action and enhanced international protection frameworks for Article 11, including through collective engagement in the WHS.

ANNEX I. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

List of IASG participants

Akiko Ito, UNDESA
Alex Mejia, UNITAR
Alexandra Heinsjo Jackson, ESCWA
Anton Bjork, ESCWA
Channe Lindstroem Oguzhan, UN-Habitat
Charlotte McClain-Nhalpo, World Bank
Coline Grunblatt, UNRWA
Facundo Chavez Penillas, OHCHR
Gisela Nauk, ESCWA
Gopal Mitra, UNICEF
Henri Morand, UNMAS
Irmgarda Kasinskaite-Buddeberg, UNESCO
Jorge Araya, OHCHR (via Skype)
Kirstin Lange, UNHCR
Maria Alarcos Cieza Moreno, WHO
Miranda Fajerman, UNDESA
Nadine Chalak, ESCWA
Nelly Dubarry, ESCWA
Ramsay Ipe, ESCWA
Sarah Rattray, UNDP
Tomoko Takeda, UNISDR

List of observers

Diab El Tabari, FICSA
Mosharraf Hossain, IDDC
Nawaf Kabbara, IDA
Vladimir Cuk, IDA

List of experts

Carol El Sayed, UNHCR
Elias Diab, expert
Emma Pearce, Women's Refugee Commission
Myroslava Tataryn, Handicap International
Shantha Rau Barriga, Human Rights Watch
Rania Al-Jazairi, ESCWA
Toufic Rizkallah, World Rehabilitation Fund