department of Economic and Social Affairs

## international day of persons with disabilities

# “the promise of technology: disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action”

Panel discussion

unhq New york | 3 december 2014 | 13.15-14.30

CONCEPT NOTE AND PROGRAMME

### International day

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)[[1]](#footnote-1) has been commemorated since 1992 to promote awareness and mobilize support for critical issues relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

This year, on 3 December, the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (SCRPD/DSPD/DESA) will organise commemorative events in New York, in- and outside UNHQ.

In addition, the SCRPD encourages actions and events around the world to raise awareness and celebrate human diversity. All other UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, Civil Society Organisations as well as individuals are encouraged to participate in the Day and engage through social media.

### Disability and crises

Over the past ten years, the world witnessed an unprecedented number of disasters and conflicts, including the Asian tsunami in 2004, the Haitian earthquake in 2010, the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, the 2012 Hurricane Sandy in the United States, and the crises in Iraq, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Syria,[[2]](#footnote-2) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Available data reveals that persons with disabilities, compared to the general population, are more vulnerable in the face of such disasters. For example, evidence shows that the mortality rate of disabled population is two to four times higher than that of the non-disabled population in many disaster cases. Persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected in disaster, emergency, and conflict situations due to inaccessible evacuation, response (including shelters, camps, and food distribution), and recovery efforts.

In recent years, Governments and civil society actors have increased their efforts to include disability in policies and strategies that precede and follow disasters. As such, there has been an increase in good policies and practices worldwide - in both developed and developing countries – that have been successful in including and engaging persons with disabilities in strategies at national and local levels.

### Objectives of the panel discussion

This panel discussion will bring together experts in the fields of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Humanitarian Action, Disability, and Technology. The panel will highlight available and innovative technologies to support inclusive DRR and emergency response, as well as emphasize the importance of making such technology accessible for all.

Additionally, the potential of innovative and assistive emerging ICT technologies will be explored, such as early-warning systems, location and navigation applications that could save the lives of persons with disabilities in disaster and emergency situations.

In addition, the discussion is expected to contribute to the consolidation of including disability in the outcome document of the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR), which will be held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai City, Japan. The outcome document will be the basis of the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

The panel discussion is expected to strengthen partnership among States, civil society organisations, experts and stakeholders through dialogues and discussions. The summary of the discussion at this forum will also be included in the compilation of good practices for action toward disability-inclusive development and posted on the UN Enable website.

Discussion Questions

1. How do persons with disabilities benefit from new generally used technologies in DRR and Humanitarian action efforts? Do technological advances fuel the mainstreaming of disability in this field?
2. What are examples of disability-specific technologies that are or can be put to use in DRR and humanitarian action?
3. What are examples of good practices relating to the use of technologies in disability-inclusive DRR and Humanitarian action?

1. Established by General Assembly [resolution 47/3](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/47/3) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.unocha.org/where-we-work/emergencies [↑](#footnote-ref-2)