

**Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**  
**Joint Statement on persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Message to be delivered by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**  
**Chair of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Inter-Agency Support Group for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, also known as the IASG. The IASG is a strategic coordinating body, composed of 30 UN system organizations committed to supporting the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The global community is facing an increasing number of humanitarian crises and natural disasters, leading to unprecedented levels of humanitarian needs. Such emergencies have a significant impact on persons with disabilities. We therefore welcome the theme of this panel, which focuses on the most marginalized groups of persons with disabilities.

Natural disasters and armed conflict increase the number of disabling barriers on a larger scale and heighten the risks and vulnerabilities that persons with disabilities face as they seek out assistance, support and protection. At the same time, persons with disabilities are often not counted in needs assessments and experience environmental, cultural and attitudinal barriers that impede their access to essential services.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is one of only two core human rights treaties that contain a specific provision on humanitarian emergencies, namely Article 11. This constitutes visible progress in the development of international frameworks for the empowerment of persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises. However, further efforts are needed to streamline the rights enshrined in the Convention into practice so that persons with disabilities are fully included as both agents and beneficiaries of emergency and relief efforts.

Delegates,

We need to strengthen disability-related age and sex disaggregated data collection and needs assessments – including a gender perspective – before, during and after crisis strikes. Only then we can have an accurate understanding of the number of persons with disabilities affected and deprived from their human rights.

It is also crucial to incorporate accessibility standards and universal design principles, not only in the construction of shelters and physical infrastructure, but also in the provision of information and services. This extends to recovery and reconstruction efforts – humanitarian and development actors should not invest in building new barriers; we should ‘build back better’.

Most importantly, affected populations must be at the center of any humanitarian and emergency response. Given the disabling effects of disasters, we must ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities, including women and girls with disabilities, in the design, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian action by addressing participation barriers and establishing effective mechanisms for consultation and coordination.

An important milestone in this regard is the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai in March of this year. The outcome of the meeting reflects a number of key points, including the recognition of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations as both resources and agents of change in disaster preparedness. It also underlines the need to ensure an all-of-society engagement and partnership in disaster risk reduction efforts. As a next step, Member States should ensure that indicators negotiated under the Sendai Framework are disability-inclusive so as to promote necessary action at the national and sub-national levels.

Chairperson,

The IASG has put the issue of persons with disabilities in emergencies at the core of its collective agenda.

Various UN agencies, in full cooperation with civil society organizations, have been working to protect and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. This has taken place through advocacy, research and the development of technical guidance. We are working closely together with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to ensure that their voices are properly heard and considered in all related UN processes.

The IASG is also creating a repository of available resources and information related to persons with disabilities in situations of risk. These will be made available on the UN Enable website and on the websites of individual UN agencies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges facing persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies are significant and complex. At the same time, humanitarian action can and should be used as an entry point for medium and long-term advancement of disability inclusion and gender equality. We must now enhance our collective commitment and cooperation in this field.

Going forward, there are significant opportunities for the international community to bolster the participation and protection of persons with disabilities in humanitarian crises. In particular, the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit, which will take place in 2016, will be an important opportunity to close existing gaps regarding persons with disabilities and to ensure that humanitarian responses are truly inclusive.

We encourage States parties to the Convention to lead the process of including persons with disabilities in the World Humanitarian Summit and to enhance participatory and inclusive protection frameworks for persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies.

Thank you.