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**UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**General Debate Day on Article 11 of the CRPD**

**National Assembly of People with Disabilities of Ukraine (NAPD)**

As a result of the attack by the Russian Federation in February 2022, Ukraine has gained certain experience, both positive and negative, regarding the enforcement of Article 11 of the CRPD.

The armed conflict has caused an extraordinary humanitarian situation: destruction of critical infrastructure, buildings, hospitals, and schools; lack of transport and access to medical services; lack of food, water, medicines, available shelters and bomb shelters, and other challenges.

After the hostilities started in 2014, occupation of parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, and annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, public organizations of people with disabilities have been expressing concerns regarding the fulfilment by the State of its obligations under Article 11 of the CRPD and they have been advocating amendments to the legislation to secure accessibility of shelters, evacuation, training of support services, and access to information.

Today’s situation with the implementation of Article 11 has shown that the State and international institutions helping Ukraine do not fully include the disability agenda and rights advocacy of persons with disabilities in the provision of humanitarian aid both in times of hostilities and when planning the renovation of Ukraine.

Taking into consideration the experience gained by public organizations of people with disabilities since the outbreak of the war, we ask the Committee’s members to pay their attention to our following recommendations, which were articulated in the process of delivering practical assistance to people with disabilities and as a result of the barriers that we faced when trying to arrange evacuation, find accessible transport for horizontal evacuation, accessible bomb shelters, and secure the rights to education for children and youth with disabilities; to provide food and medicine to institutions and individuals, to provide medical aid to women and men with disabilities who lost their homes and became internally displaced persons, and to provide sign language interpretation of the key news, and others.

To ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, military operations, and emergency humanitarian situations, it is necessary to provide:

* unified understanding of disability issues in compliance with the CRPD by all humanitarian missions. All the staff members of humanitarian organizations and international institutions must be well-informed in disability issues.

The situation in Ukraine has shown that the lack of disability knowledge resulted in the fact that many people with disabilities were deprived of an access to humanitarian and financial assistance.[[1]](#footnote-1)

* inclusiveness of legislation regulating responses to situations of risk, wars, and humanitarian emergencies. It is extremely important that such documents be drafted with the participation of persons with disabilities and organizations representing their interests;
* available guidelines on how to accompany persons with disabilities (and their relatives), including those who move with the help of assistive rehabilitation devices, who have vision, hearing, mental, and psychosocial impairments, and who live in boarding institutions; how to keep records of people with disabilities before and during hostilities and emergency humanitarian situations; how to respect and treat them properly, and how to communicate with such people;
* available and inclusive plans for evacuation and arrangement of shelters in case of hostilities. It is extremely important that such documents be prepared with the participation of people with disabilities and organizations representing their interests;
* available plans for evacuation of institutions for people with psycho-social disorders; institutions for children with disabilities. The lack of clear plans for evacuation of such institutions in Ukraine, absence of accessible transport vehicles, including vehicles for horizontal evacuation, shortage of staff and failure to consider the specific nature of such institutions have led to a situation when evacuation was taking place in a haphazard manner and some institutions did not manage to evacuate in time and found themselves in the temporarily occupied areas;
* collection of statistics on people with disabilities when delivering humanitarian aid. The situation in Ukraine has revealed that currently neither international institutions nor state bodies have statistical data on how many people with disabilities have left Ukraine and how many remain in the territory of Ukraine, how many have died, and how many obtained access to food aid, cash payments, etc.;
* training for service units in various bodies and departments so that the staff are informed on and observe the rules of accompanying persons with disabilities (and their relatives) in wartime and in emergency situations. It is important to involve people with disabilities in such trainings;
* accessible information on risk situations and algorithms of actions in such situations for all categories of people with disabilities. It is important that the information be provided in alternative formats and allow for a potential lack of electricity, Internet, TV and radio signal. The NAPD is currently concerned that information is not being provided in accessible formats; due to the lack of computers and smartphones, people with disabilities, especially in rural areas, elderly people, and people living alone do not have timely and proper access to information, and therefore humanitarian assistance often fails to reach them;
* available and accessible water, food, medicines, and other essentials. It should be noted that in some cases, assistance should be delivered “to the door” as it is impossible for people with high support needs and people with low mobility to leave their homes;
* available and architecturally accessible bomb shelters and other shelters, which must be equipped with ventilation, access to water and sewage, accessible sanitary and hygienic rooms, including toilets. Accessibility audits of bomb shelters should be implemented with the involvement of organizations of people with disabilities, and information on the accessibility of available bomb shelters should be publicly available;
* accessibility of on-land border crossing points, waypoints, and evacuation points;
* disability inclusion of prefab houses for temporary accommodation. In Ukraine, the modular towns which were built as part of international aid from other countries are not accessible to people with disabilities;
* simplified mechanisms to release people with disabilities from mobilization and military service in situations of risk;
* automated extension of disability, disability documentation, and disability benefits in situations of risk;
* automated extension of the right to assistive rehabilitation devices, medical products, and rehabilitation services in situations of risk;
* simplified procedure for people with disabilities to travel abroad for the period of a risk situation and military operations;
* inclusive education at all levels of education;
* accessible humanitarian assistance for all people with disabilities, including cash payments from international organizations; and
* inclusion of people with disabilities and organizations representing their interests in consultative and advisory bodies and clusters engaged in humanitarian assistance.

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