Dear delegates and observers,

My name is Mauot Luis Anyang from South Sudan, Executive director and Chairperson of South Sudan Association of the Visually Impaired.

I am privileged to be the first OPD representative in South Sudan to participate in UNCRPD committee sessions and UNOHCR, therefore, allow me to acknowledge that without IDA support, voices of people with disabilities in South Sudan would have been missing from today’s session.

Although my intention is that this contribution may apply to many persons with disabilities in context of disasters, conflict and emergencies, the examples sighted herein are mainly derived from experience in South Sudan, where On 24 February 2023, the President of South Sudan signed the UNCRPD into law.

In fact, during armed conflict and disaster, persons with disabilities face myriad challenges, like any other person affected by disaster and sometimes with additional layer because of disability, among others:

According to unverified information of inter-communal violence, there was an incident were historically competing communities fought because of unverified report of clamed that children were kidnapped by members believed to belong to competing from another competing community and pierce their eyes with sphere to make them blind as form of punishment, when the children were traced and found to have been blinded the community where they belong decided to kill them as it prefers to see them dead than blind and thereafter went for revenge suggesting that creating disability could also be used as a tactic of war.

Also, if you are lucky to be rescued as a person with disability who also suffer from chronic disease such as hypertension and diabetes, access to medication presents inevitable live threat most often because of in availability of the medication if not so, again inaccessibility of information about the service or physical environment where such service is provided.

More sadly, families are often forced to make difficult choices for survival, in Girard queens report on military operation, there was example of a person leaving his child with disability and taken his cow saying that at least the cow can help the family with milk denoting that his child with disability has nothing to offer, reflecting deeply rooted cultural perceptions and believes, this example highlight the plight of many children with disabilities affected by the civil conflict in South Sudan were they are left with no choice but to wait for their sadden death.

Furthermore despite education being a human right, accessibility and disinformation often prevail to bar such, hence Persons with disabilities often do not attend schools particularly those with visual, hearing, intellectual and mental impairment who are based in internally displaced persons camps and protection of civilians cites which were formed by the United Nations when conflict erupted in 2013 due to inaccessibility and lack of awareness.

Despite efforts to create awareness on disability, the level of ignorance remains high as some families continue to hide persons with disabilities for fear of public opinions and accusation that such is a punishment from god for past wrong doing by a member of the family hence potentially be isolated, which may hinder rescue efforts including transitional justice process.

Lack of organizations of persons with disabilities in many disaster setting or disintegration of such entities also render their voices unheard and their influence in the disaster cycle missing.

Lastly, perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse also take advantage of Women with disabilities who may not be able to identify them most importantly, be believed by even law enforcement agencies and this is hardly reported because it is considered as a social taboo.

These challenges are just a tip of the iceberg of what need to be explored through rigorous research in persons with disabilities experiences with disasters.

Thank you