Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

31st session (12 August- 5 September 2024)

STATEMENT ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AFFECTED BY DISASTERS

Increasingly, extensive disasters are affecting the world such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, wildfires, and tsunamis, which pose significant challenges to communities worldwide. The situation of climate change is exacerbating these disasters.

Persons with disabilities, who constitute 16% of the world's population are frequently the most affected by hazards and climate-induced disasters.

These situations are extremely concerning to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as they have profound implications for the fundamental rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Hurricane Beryl in the Caribbean, wildfires in Canada, Greece and Brazil, **heatwaves in the United States and Southern Europe**, **floods and landslides across South Asia** are just examples that left a trail of destruction over the summer.

Recent statistical data confirms the challenges faced by persons with disabilities during disasters and humanitarian emergencies. According to a report from the World Health Organization (2023), persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by emergencies, with mortality rates up to four times higher than those without disabilities. Additionally, persons with disabilities face discrimination, exclusion, and limited access to basic services, rendering them vulnerable, and exacerbating the vulnerability of those with disabilities who live in institutions or segregated contexts.

The evidence also demonstrates that persons with disabilities are not frequently included in disaster preparedness and response plans and frameworks. The lack of community based inclusive development limits the effective participation of persons with disabilities in humanitarian work and in accessing relief programs.

The response and recovery to disasters require adequate measures to protect and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in climate change action, disaster risk reduction, people-centred and inclusive anticipatory action, humanitarian emergency planning for and response to emergency situations, evacuations, and healthcare services.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recalling articles 3, 4, 5 and 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 13, calls on all States parties to:

* Comply with international law, address the requirements, and closely consult and actively involve persons with disabilities in disaster planning, dedicated leadership roles for disability experts in decision making is essential – persons with disabilities should be included in all policymaking and implementation for disaster resilience.
* Take urgent measures to ensure equity between persons with and without disabilities in all measures to reduce and prevent disaster risk and take actions to better address intersectionality and diversity in all aspects of Disaster Risk Reduction policy and practice.
* Prioritize disability inclusion as a key policy concern and a key objective for disaster risk reduction.
* Ensure that persons with disabilities are included in the target audience for allocated resources during natural disasters by benchmarking disability to assistance.
* Establish accountable mechanisms that will allow for easy tracking of persons with disabilities who receive assistance during and after a natural disaster.
* Facilitate and support capacity-building relating to the management of disasters and humanitarian emergencies, including through the exchange, and sharing of information, experiences, training programmes and best practices for governments and organizations of and for persons with disabilities.
* Ensure that shelters are accessible to persons with disabilities and that facilities are in place to preserve the dignity of persons with disabilities, especially women and girls with disabilities at shelters.
* Ensure that the principle of “build back better” is disability inclusive, that the rebuilding of housing and infrastructure is accessible, following the principles of universal design and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and that does not result into further institutionalization or trans institutionalization, but in the increase of community-based support to persons with disabilities, which is respectful to their self-determination, autonomy, will and preferences.

The Committee continues to develop its General Comment on article 11 of the Convention.

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