



## **ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment 2016**

### **Including the Excluded: Addressing Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Situations of Risk and Humanitarian**

Organized by

The Permanent Missions of Finland, in partnership with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Disability Alliance

**Tuesday 28 June, 08:30 – 09:45**

**Conference Room 11, United Nations Secretariat, New York**

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year's theme: *Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.*

#### **Background and objectives**

*Around 3 paragraphs*

In situations of armed conflict and disasters, persons with disabilities represent one of the most marginalized social groups. They often face extreme difficulties during evacuation or flight, may be separated from their assistive devices and/or may be left behind by family or community members who are unable to assist them. During disasters, evidence has shown the mortality rate of persons with disabilities to be two to four times higher than that of persons without disabilities. Disasters and conflict also impact on the built environment, creating additional barriers and limitations. In humanitarian responses, children and adults with disabilities experience greater limitations in accessing assistance and services, including education, health care and shelter and may require additional or specialized support for their specific needs. Women and girls with disabilities are often at increased risk of physical and sexual violence, discrimination and abuse. Therefore their empowerment and protection should be given special attention to. Following the breakdown of social cohesion and traditional community structures, persons with disabilities also face substantial protection concerns in crisis, including vulnerability to abuse and violence. At the same time, persons with disabilities are rarely included in decision-making processes that impact their lives, in particular the planning, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian action.

Within the population itself, multiple discrimination faced by persons with disabilities on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, location or disability status further exacerbates marginalization.

This side event will build on the discussions of the World Humanitarian Summit on persons with disability in humanitarian contexts in order to further raise awareness about and galvanize support in a Member State process for the policies and procedures that could further protect persons with disabilities in times of crisis but also highlight the measures that should be enacted in order to allow for their participation in humanitarian action.

#### **Discussion points**

Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following suggested questions:

- How can the United Nation system and its Member States move forward in ensuring the full realization of human rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies? What is the role of organizations of persons with disabilities, broader civil society and other actors in this process?
- What are good practices, strategies and challenges in ensuring inclusive emergency responses? How can humanitarian actors address institutional, structural, attitudinal, physical, communication and other barriers that restrict participation?
- What actions can parties to armed conflict take to improve protection of children and adults with disabilities?
- What action can different stakeholders take to empower women and girls with disabilities and better protect them from physical, sexual and other forms of violence and abuse?

### **Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations**

Following the WHS special session on Disability, and the launch of the Charter on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action during the Summit, the side event aims to provide a forum for discussing ways to better address specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities in times of crisis and addressing rights of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, in order to ensure respect for human rights in humanitarian emergencies.

In light of this, the intended outcomes of this event are as follows:

- Raise awareness on the Charter on inclusion of persons with disabilities among humanitarian actors, and discuss salient issues regarding its implementation.
- Highlight the importance of participation of persons with disabilities in all phases of humanitarian action and how it can be achieved.
- Raise awareness on protection issues of children with disabilities in situations of armed conflict and measures required to ensure their safety and protection.
- Underscore the importance of empowering women and girls with disabilities.

### **Format**

*Structured panel discussion with Q&A section:*

#### **Chair/Moderator:**

- Ms. Valerie Sherrer, Director of Emergencies, CBM International

#### **Panel composition:**

- Mr. Claus-Jerker Lindroos, Director of the Unit for Humanitarian Assistance and Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
- Ms. Afshan Khan, Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF
- Mr. Vladimir Cuk, Executive Director, International Disability Alliance

### **Background Material**

## WHS Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Humanitarian Action

### **Contact**

*For more information, please contact:*

- **Ms. Kariane Peek Cabrera**, Humanitarian Policy Officer, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF ([kpeekcabrera@unicef.org](mailto:kpeekcabrera@unicef.org))
- **Ms. Georgia Dominik**, Human Rights and Social Development Officer, International Disability Alliance ([gdominik@ida-secretariat.org](mailto:gdominik@ida-secretariat.org))