



## **The European Union at the World Humanitarian Summit: Make Humanitarian Action Work for Everyone**

**The International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) is calling on the European Union to be a champion for disability inclusion in humanitarian action at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016 and to endorse the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action to be launched at the WHS Special Session on disabilities.**

We welcome the conclusions that were adopted by the Council of the European Union in March 2015, in which the Council invites the Member States and the European Commission to highlight “the need to apply the principle of non-discrimination and incorporate the diverse needs of persons with disabilities throughout the disaster management cycle” and to enhance disability inclusive disaster management planning at all levels.

We also welcome the commitment of the European Union to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which the EU is the only regional organisation worldwide to have signed. Article 11 of the CRPD covers the situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. In the EU’s first review, the CRPD Committee of the UN expresses its concerns about “the lack of inclusion of persons with disabilities in all European Union policies and guidelines on humanitarian aid” and calls the EU to live up to its commitments.

We therefore want to see the EU to be a champion for disability inclusion in humanitarian action in the final preparation stage towards the WHS and at the Summit itself. We call for strong positions of all EU institutions and especially for a clear message in the Council Conclusions on the World Humanitarian Summit that are scheduled for May 2016.

We call the European Union and its Member States to ensure that the principle “Leave no one behind”, that has been highlighted in the UN Secretary-General’s Report for the WHS, materialises in respective commitments for persons with disabilities and enhanced humanitarian actors’ practices.

More concretely, we call on the EU and Member State delegations to get involved in the multi-stakeholder process of developing, endorsing and implementing the **Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action** and the related Action Plan.

This Charter is being developed by a pool of stakeholders, including representatives from States, international organisations, UN agencies, organisations of persons with disabilities and NGOs and will be launched at the WHS Special Session “Making humanitarian action inclusive of persons with disabilities”.



The Charter emphasizes a number of core principles that will support humanitarian actor practices, including: ensuring non-discrimination; fostering consultation; participation and leadership of people with disabilities; developing inclusive policies and guidelines; ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness of responses and services; and improving cooperation among humanitarian actors.

IDDC invites the European Union and its Member States to join this multi-stakeholder process and remains at your disposal for any question on the WHS Special Session "Making humanitarian action inclusive of persons with disabilities", as well as on the Charter and Action Plan.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Priscille Geiser', is positioned above the typed name.

Priscille Geiser, IDDC Chair

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IDDC is a global consortium of disability and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mainstream development NGOs and disabled people's organisations (DPOs) supporting disability and development work in more than 100 countries around the world.



## Background

According to the World Health Organization, 15% of the global population are persons with disabilities. They are among the most disproportionately affected by disaster or conflict situations, and experience extra challenges in accessing relief and recovery support. Furthermore, humanitarian crises result in an increase of people who experience disability, due to new injuries or lack of available medical care, and support structures may also collapse, exacerbating the impact of the situation on those most at risk.

Persons with disabilities remain largely invisible among affected populations; they are poorly identified or counted in refugee registration, often excluded from the planning, assessment or design of humanitarian relief, and unable to access humanitarian assistance programs. A recent study, part of the World Humanitarian Summit official consultations<sup>1</sup> and led by Handicap International, has confirmed that three-quarters of persons with disabilities do not have adequate access to basic assistance, including water, shelter, food or health services in a crisis. Half of the participants also reported no access to disability-specific services, such as rehabilitation or assistive devices, and a lack of access to social workers or interpreters, particularly in conflict settings. Moreover, persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls, are at heightened risk of violence in humanitarian crises, including sexual and domestic abuse, exploitation and discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

Crucially, persons with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) have untapped capacity, but they are rarely consulted and included in decision making processes. Utilising these resources will ensure that their unique skills and knowledge support the overall humanitarian response.

## Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and Action Plan

Awareness and understanding of disability inclusion is progressing, and humanitarian agencies are increasingly adopting internal policies and tools to support their actions. There are, however, neither universally endorsed principles for a disability inclusive humanitarian action, nor standards or guidelines to ensure a common approach and enhance effectiveness of and accountability in humanitarian action.

Developing a **Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action** and an **Action Plan to implement the Charter** would support States' obligations set out under the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, and would facilitate the implementation of other inclusive frameworks, such as the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction** and the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, recognising and addressing the capacities, rights and requirements of persons with disabilities affected by crisis and conflict. The Charter and Action Plan are currently under development.

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<sup>1</sup> Handicap International, *Disability in humanitarian context: Views from affected people and field organisations* (Handicap International, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Women's Refugee Commission, *Disability inclusion: Translating policy into practice in humanitarian action* (New York, WRC 2014).