



**WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT**

ISTANBUL • 23-24 May 2016

# Inclusion of persons with disabilities into humanitarian action

## SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

Core Responsibility Three of the Agenda for Humanity

**“The Charter on Inclusion of persons with disability in humanitarian action is a breakthrough in recognizing the special needs of people with disabilities during emergencies.”**

**Mr. Ban Ki-Moon,  
Secretary-General,  
United Nations**

### I. Overview

Representing 15% of any affected population<sup>1</sup>, persons with disabilities are often excluded from humanitarian aid and unable to participate in decision making process – literally ‘left behind’. Some 75% of persons with disabilities affected by crises do not have adequate access to humanitarian assistance<sup>2</sup>.

The session launched a [Charter](#) on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action. Characterized as “ground breaking” by the Secretary General, and endorsed by 70 organizations, this document represented the result of several months of intensive discussions under the auspices of the WHS consultation process. The five core principles of the Charter are:

- Non-discrimination
- Inclusive response and services
- Full participation of persons with disabilities in crisis decision making
- Reinforcement and development of inclusive policies
- Sharing of expertise, cooperation and coordination between all actors

This is the first time that Member States, UN Agencies, the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, NGO networks and civil society joined forces around a common document on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

As of the end of the Special Session, 101 stakeholders, including 12 Member States, 9 UN agencies, 13 international and national NGO networks, 40 NGOs, the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, as well as 37 organizations representative of persons with disabilities, had endorsed the charter. The full list is available at: [www.humanitariananddisabilitycharter.org](http://www.humanitariananddisabilitycharter.org)

## II. Key outcomes/themes

As well as endorsing the Charter, participants put forward commitments including the development of global guidelines on disability inclusion in humanitarian action, targets for increased participation of persons with disabilities in decision making and planning of humanitarian programmes, increased data collection, improved access to services and assistance, technical and financial cooperation, and fostering of partnerships with local and national organizations representative of persons with disabilities.

The number of organizations endorsing the charter, and the additional commitments received in support of its objectives, show strong political will to make changes around disability inclusion in humanitarian action. The session included an endorsement ceremony during which speakers reaffirmed their **determination** to place all affected people, including those with disabilities, at the centre of humanitarian action. They committed to take practical action to ensure that persons with disabilities fully benefit from, and contribute to, humanitarian aid, in line with humanitarian principles and the Summit's core responsibility to "leave no one behind".

The implementation of the charter will have a significant impact on the ability of people with disabilities to access humanitarian assistance and to allow them to participate in decision making processes that directly affect their lives.

In their interventions, representatives from NGOs underlined that there is now a collective agreement within the humanitarian community, which also underpinned the Special Session, to urgently change humanitarian practices and actions, so that they become inclusive of persons with disabilities. They committed to move "beyond words" and to reinforce bridges between their members, the humanitarian sector, the UN system and institutional partners.

## III. Way Forward

The aims of the Charter must be put into action to make a concrete difference for persons with disabilities affected by crisis. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has committed to host the development of these global guidelines. Member States pledged to allocate resources or technical expertise for the implementation of the Charter, as well as for other initiatives, including integrating disability into their policies, strategic frameworks, protection and advocacy programmes, funding new research pieces and fostering the collection of better disaggregated data. It will be particularly



important, in order to maintain the momentum created by the Special session, that a mechanism is identified that could continue to bring together the various stakeholders' work streams around disability inclusion.

## IV. Speakers

### **Moderator:**

- Ms. Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with disabilities

### **Speakers:**

- Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General, United Nations
- Ms. Nelly Caleb, Co-Chair, Pacific Disability Forum
- Mr. Colin Allen, Chair, International Disability Alliance
- Ms. Florence Daunis, Deputy Director, Handicap International
- Ms. Rose Obol Achayo, Chairperson, Network of African Women with Disabilities

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/)

<sup>2</sup> "Disability in humanitarian contexts: views from affected people and field organisations", Handicap International, July 2015