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## **Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Changing Mindsets through Knowledge**

22-23 April 2014  
Sendai, Japan

### **Sendai Statement to Promote Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilient, Inclusive and Equitable Societies in Asia and the Pacific**

We, persons with disabilities, policymakers, practitioners and advocates in the fields of disaster risk reduction and disability rights, gathered at the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Changing Mindsets through Knowledge, held in Sendai, Japan, on 22 and 23 April 2014, united in our common concern over the prevailing tendency in the disaster risk reduction discourse to limit disability within the category of vulnerable groups,

*Recognizing* that disability is a cross-cutting development issue,

*Reaffirming* the spirit and intent of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific,

*Recognizing* that the terms “disaster risk reduction” and “disaster risk management” are used interchangeably by many stakeholders, and in this document “disaster risk reduction” is used in consonance with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters,

*Also recognizing* the active contributions of member States of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to deepening and taking forward the comprehensive conceptual approach, policy and practice concerning disaster risk reduction,

*Appreciating* the leadership of the Government of Japan in hosting the third World Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, from 14 to 18 March 2015,

*Recognizing* the valuable insights and timely action of civil society organizations regarding disaster risk reduction and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities,

*Appreciating* the first-ever global online survey of persons living with disabilities on how they cope with disasters, which was conducted by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in 2013,

*Welcoming* the timely coorganization of the Asia-Pacific Meeting on Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction: Changing Mindsets through Knowledge by ESCAP, Rehabilitation International and The Nippon Foundation,

*Also welcoming* the changing emphasis of the global discourse from viewing disasters as external shocks on normally functioning economies, to viewing them as manifestations of underlying risk drivers inherent to development, which generate and accumulate disaster risks,

*Expressing* concern over the fact that the peoples, communities and nations of the Asian and Pacific region are 30 times more likely to be affected by disasters than those in North America and Europe,

*Also expressing* concern over indications that the death rate of persons with disabilities could be two to four times higher than that of persons without disabilities, based on recent Japanese data, and that this gap is expected to widen, as the region's present estimate of 650 million persons with disabilities is projected to further increase, due to many factors, including population ageing at an unprecedented pace, as well as changing lifestyles and the rising prevalence of chronic health conditions,

*Further expressing* concern that disasters lead to physical and psychosocial impairments, which in interaction with various barriers, undermine economic and social participation in society, particularly of persons with disabilities and their families,

*We, therefore, commit* to making concerted efforts to achieve the explicit and systematic inclusion of disability perspectives in the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework, including by seizing opportunities presented by the 2014 Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management (Suva, 2 to 4 June 2014), and the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Bangkok, 22 to 26 June 2014), and for this purpose, shall use the following elements:

- A. Core messages;
- B. Specific action for disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction;
- C. Strategic action for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

#### **A. Core messages**

- 1. Disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction is critical for the creation of resilient, inclusive and equitable societies.**
- 2. Engaging, on an equitable basis, girls and boys and women and men with disabilities, and their organizations, in all phases of disaster risk reduction and in decision-making processes are prerequisites for everyone's meaningful participation. Communities will benefit from their knowledge and skills in strengthening resilience.**

- (a) **Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction optimizes the resilience and survival of persons with disabilities.**

Integrating disability perspectives into all phases of disaster risk reduction, especially disaster preparedness, enables persons with disabilities and their support personnel, to access disaster-related information and knowledge, to assess risk, plan, as well as to participate in drills and in disability sensitization exercises, and in the response and recovery process.

- (b) **Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction increases the resilience and chances of survival of all persons in the community and minimizes damage and loss.**

Investing in infrastructure development that incorporates the principles of universal design yields physical and information environments, public transportation, and related services that persons with disabilities can use. The accessibility and usability of such environments and services enhance the conditions for all citizens' safety, ease of communication, responsiveness and movement.

#### **B. Specific action for disability inclusion in disaster risk reduction**

1. National governments and local authorities, supported by organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations, should foster multiministerial, multisectoral and multilevel coordination and collaboration, to ensure that disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction is mandated and implemented, through actions that include the following:
  - (a) Engage persons with disabilities and disability-related organizations in establishing disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management policies, plans and strategies at, the national level for implementation at local and other levels;
  - (b) Apply universal design principles, in combination with reasonable accommodation, in all phases of disaster risk reduction, with particular attention to the following: general infrastructure development, risk assessment, preparedness planning, drills, early warning systems, search and rescue systems, emergency shelters, and temporary housing;
  - (c) Compile disaster statistics, disaggregated at least by sex and age, on comparative rates of death and injury, as well as damage and loss of assets, among persons with disabilities, including those who acquire impairments as a result of disasters, and persons without disabilities;
  - (d) Support disability-inclusive research on the parameters for building an equitable and resilient society;

- (e) Strengthen the disability dimension in capability development programmes, with gender-balanced participation, for parliamentarians, disaster risk reduction policymakers and practitioners, including through the development of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction training guidelines, as well as related monitoring and evaluation tools;
  - (f) Strengthen community-based inclusive development to empower persons with disabilities for full participation in, and contribution to, all phases of disaster risk reduction;
  - (g) Enable persons with disabilities, through the provision of information and knowledge, including local maps and evacuation plans in accessible and easy-to-understand format and language, to undertake informed decision-making;
  - (h) Use innovative technologies, such as those for crowdsourcing, to enhance the chances of survival in the face of disaster;
  - (i) Ensure that social protection schemes support girls and boys and women and men with disabilities, including through the equitable provision of financial support, and economic empowerment programmes, as well as assistive devices with related services for their long-term maintenance and use;
  - (j) Use creative media, such as art, drama and other performing arts, in community and group drills on a regular basis, to strengthen preparedness and responsiveness;
  - (k) Undertake and enhance public awareness campaigns, including on disaster risk reduction, to foster positive perceptions of persons with disabilities as equal citizens and active agents;
  - (l) Disseminate the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework and related legal and policy measures in national and local languages and in formats that are accessible by persons with disabilities.
2. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, composed of key operational United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian partners, should include disability-inclusive planning in their coordination of humanitarian policy development to improve the delivery of humanitarian disaster assistance.
  3. Development cooperation agencies and their civil society organization partners should facilitate technical cooperation on disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction, including through the sharing of good practices, experiences and expertise.

### **C. Strategic action for disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction**

1. *We request* the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to focus attention on the implementation of Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its regular reviews of reports of States Parties to the Convention, as well as to the linkage between Article 11 of the Convention with disability inclusion in the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework and the post-2015 sustainable development goals.
2. *We commit* to working closely with member States and civil society organizations to advocate the aspirations and issues concerning girls and women with disabilities in relation to disaster risk reduction in the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
3. *We also commit* to supporting periodic review of implementation, in the Asian and Pacific region, of the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework, especially in relation to progress tracking of the six disability-inclusive indicators in Goal 7 of the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific: Ensure disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction and management.
4. *We request* member States to ensure that the core messages, as well as specific action and strategic action contained in this document are duly reflected in the following:
  - (a) The post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework, to explicitly reflect disability perspectives, including in measurable indicators of progress, without confining disability only to the category of vulnerable groups;
  - (b) Development and adoption of the post-2015 sustainable development goals.

Adopted by acclamation  
Sendai, Japan  
23 April 2014