

Statement by Members the Group of Friends of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva and other countries regarding COVID 19- Pandemic and the Rights of Persons with disabilities

15 June 2020

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has had severe effects on societies and individuals, especially those in vulnerable situations. The crisis has brought new challenges to the protection of human rights and in some cases exacerbated existing ones.
2. In this context, the Group of Friends of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Geneva, consider it of utmost importance to highlight the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities around the world and the urgent need to address this in an appropriate and comprehensive manner.
3. We strongly support the documents prepared jointly by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the World Health Organization, other United Nations entities and organizations of persons with disabilities, which provide States with practical guidance on addressing the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of COVID-19.¹
4. We welcome also the launch of the United Nations Secretary General's "Policy Brief: A Disability- Inclusive Response to COVID- 19" on May 6, 2020, highlighting that persons with disabilities are at greater risk of discrimination or exclusion from access to health care services, based on assumptions about quality or value of life.
5. National and global responses to the pandemic should be disability inclusive and should provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programmes as provided to other persons. The participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in responses to the pandemic is essential to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities are addressed.
6. It is equally important to respect persons with disabilities' autonomy and independence, and in this regard, actions should be taken to overcome disruptions during the pandemic of essential support systems for persons with disabilities, and ensure access to habilitation and rehabilitation services. Actions should also be taken to comply with States' obligations to ensure children with disabilities' right to education, and promoting their access to communication technologies.
7. Considering that, persons with disabilities, including older persons, living in institutions are more likely to contract the virus and have higher rates of mortality, it is crucial to ensure their human dignity through effective hygiene measures, equitable

¹[Letter sent by the SR Disability to all Permanent Missions in Geneva about COVID-19 and disability](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/Leaflet_CRPD_COVID19.pdf), Disability Inclusive Social Protection Response to COVID-19 Crisis https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/Leaflet_CRPD_COVID19.pdf
Disability considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Disability/COVID-19_disability_logos.pdf

quality and access to care and medicines, and to concentrate our efforts and resources in community-based solutions, including inclusive support services.

8. We invite the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to continue to monitor the human rights impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities at the country level, including social care homes, prisons, psychiatric institutions, rehabilitation and education facilities that also provide housing for persons with disabilities.
9. We strongly recommend States, civil society organizations and the private sector provide information on prevention measures, health care services and developments regarding the pandemic in accessible formats
10. We call on States and society to respond appropriately to prevent domestic violence, which disproportionately affects persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls, and exacerbated by intersecting forms of discrimination, and provide them with the means to reach support networks and guarantee their access to justice.
11. We encourage States to promote the mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in COVID-19 responses, and to report on related actions, as applicable, under the Universal Periodic Review, periodic reporting on human rights treaties, particularly the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and other accountability and monitoring mechanisms.
12. We recommend States ensure that recovery actions reflect lessons learned from the COVID19 emergency and work collaboratively with the United Nations system, including to share lessons learned and good practices and strengthen cooperation in this particular matter.
13. We are convinced that the only way to leave no one behind, as stated in the 2030 Agenda, is to design and implement policies that lead us to consolidate inclusive and accessible societies and that this crisis represents an opportunity to move in this direction.

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