

Joint Statement: Persons with Disabilities and COVID-19

**by the Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
on behalf of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special
Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility**

1. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights treaty, the framework of which, developed by the Committee, provides States with a legally binding structure for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their related targets. This is not only the case for those targets that explicitly refer to persons with disabilities, but for all goals and targets. It also includes measures to ensure that the lives and rights of persons with disabilities are appropriately protected in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Article 11 of the CRPD establishes that States parties shall take all possible measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in the national response to situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. This comprises measures in all areas of life of persons with disabilities, including the protection of their access to the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination, general wellbeing and prevention of infectious diseases, and measures to ensure protection against negative attitudes, isolation, and stigmatization that may arise in the midst of the crisis.
3. The 2030 Agenda sets targets aimed at responding to epidemics, particularly through achieving universal health coverage, ensuring access to medicine and vaccines, promoting mental health and well-being, and reinforcing the capacity of all countries in early warning, risk reduction and risk management for national and global health.
4. By implementing their obligations under the CRPD and fulfilling the commitments in the Sustainable Development Agenda, States will be able to safeguard the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. In doing so, States should consider the diversity among persons with disabilities, with a particular focus on gender and age, and the situation of persons with disabilities facing deprivation and hardship.
5. States should ensure the safety and integrity of persons with disabilities and accelerate measures of deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities from all types of institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has already affected nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals and other detention centers, where there are heightened risks for persons with disabilities still in institutions.
6. The Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility

call upon all relevant authorities to adopt measures to appropriately respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring inclusion and the effective participation of persons with disabilities.

7. States should take all appropriate measures to ensure access for persons with disabilities to health services and provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of health care as provided to other persons, including mental health services. States should also continue providing to persons with disabilities the health services required by persons with disabilities specifically because of their disabilities. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, State should prevent discriminatory denial of health care or life-saving services, food or fluids on the basis of disability.

8. States must ensure that persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, are closely consulted with and actively involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of COVID-19 prevention and containment measures.

9. States should safeguard the provision of food, medicine, and other supplies for persons with disabilities during situations of isolation and quarantine. The range of support in the community, including home-care and personal assistance support, and rehabilitation services, when necessary, must be ensured and not discontinued as they are essential for the exercise of the rights of persons with disabilities. All services related to COVID-19 crisis, including remote/telephone medical advice, quarantine facilities, public information, including information on essential supplies and services should be accessible for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others and provided on accessible platforms in various alternative formats, modes and methods of communication.

10. We call upon States to ensure that priority be given to address situations of poverty, and deprivation of persons with disabilities in their crisis management plans. States should ensure that economic hardship during the crisis is addressed also with respect to persons with disabilities who may face the loss of jobs and additional barriers to meet basic essential needs.

Danlami Basharu
Chair
UN Committee on the Rights
of Persons with Disabilities

María Soledad Cisternas Reyes
Special Envoy of the UNSG on
Disability and Accessibility
