**Submission by the Syrian Arab Republic for the preparation of the general comment on Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Persons with disabilities in situation of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

**Brief overview of the national framework in the Syrian Arab Republic:**

* The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic guarantees the right of civilians to live in peace, health, and protection from all dangers. It stipulates in its Article (22): “The state guarantees every citizen and his family in cases of emergency, disease, disability, orphanhood, and old age.”
* The Syrian Arab Republic has established specialized agencies and trained special staff to carry out the task of protecting and defending civilians in situations of peace and war.
* The National Plan for Disability and its implementation strategies includes arrangements for the safety of all individuals, including people with disabilities, in situations of war, peace, natural disasters among other situations.
* The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic works diligently, during the humanitarian situation it has witnessed against the backdrop of the terrorist war that was launched against it, and in cases of natural disasters and medical emergencies, including during the earthquake disaster that struck the country, to secure the requirements for care, first aid and protection of the victims on the same level without discrimination between persons with disabilities and ordinary people, with taking into account the special needs of people with disabilities.

**Proposals for the general comment:**

1. The focus should be on the importance of the inclusion of the specific needs of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction plans and strategies to protect persons with disabilities in cases of risk and humanitarian emergencies, while ensuring the involvement of persons with disabilities in the process of preparing such plans and strategies.

2. An action plan to implement the Charter for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action should be adopted, with providing clear and measurable goals and indicators for its implementation.

3. The inclusion of disability in immigration and asylum policies, and issuance of guidelines to agencies and member states on the contradiction of arbitrary detention of persons with disabilities in the context of migration and asylum is not in line with the provisions of the Convention.

4. Preparing guidelines aimed at ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all stages of humanitarian action, including to guarantee that persons with disabilities are benefiting from humanitarian assistance and at the same time to be empowered actors in the humanitarian response. It is also important to develop and implement humanitarian response plans in a manner that is more appropriate to the needs of people with disabilities.

5. Ensure that plans to respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and other health emergencies, are inclusive to persons with disabilities, as all plans related to health emergencies. Enhance cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities, and ensure the provision of information related to the pandemic and measures to address it. Responses should be proactive to the specific needs of persons with disabilities related to COVID-19, including those related to the lack of information for the public and the role of media to overcome that in a manner that meets the needs of persons with disabilities and their right to obtain information.

6. The importance of consulting persons with disabilities and the organizations that represent them in all stages of prevention and protection in situations that fall within this article to ensure the design of more appropriate means of prevention, preparedness and response.

7. Ensure the provision of access to information about the services provided by shelter centers in the case of internally displaced persons, such as health care services, food distribution, registration and documentation, through appropriate means of communication for persons with disabilities.

8. Develop social safety networks, economic and social empowerment, and psychological and social support programs in a way that reflects the reality and needs of people with disabilities, and aims to enhance their resilience and expand their means of participation in public life.

9. Social care institutions and centers should be equipped to be able to provide basic services for people with disabilities in such cases, and to be accessible easily.

10. Service providers should be trained on an ongoing basis on rehabilitation services, especially in the phases of response or recovery from the impacts of natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

11. Emphasis the importance of international cooperation in supporting the efforts of countries facing the exceptional circumstances addressed in Article 11 of the Convention in the context of implementing programs to enhance the steadfastness of persons with disabilities, securing shelters for those affected, and providing full health, relief and urgent care services to those affected, as well as in the stages of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

12. The importance of the inclusion in the general comment a reference to the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures in limiting or undermining the capabilities of targeted countries to provide preparedness requirements for natural disasters or to achieve coherent and comprehensive humanitarian responses, especially with regard to ensuring the functioning of basic sectors such as health sector, and providing the necessary means and equipment for rehabilitation. Such measures also impede the implementation of international organizations programs working in the humanitarian field in countries facing such exceptional cases.

These negative effects appeared clearly in the aftermath of the disaster of the earthquake that struck the Syrian Arab Republic, which confirmed doubtlessly the disastrous impact of such measures on the readiness of the health sector to respond to emergencies, provide rescue equipment, remove rubble, and necessary relief materials and tools, including requirements to address the special needs of people with disabilities. This situation reveals that the "humanitarian exemptions" claimed by countries impose ucms to justify their policies are fallacious and cannot be applied, especially in the cases of countries that face multi-layered sanctions systems targeting a wide range of basic sectors.

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