Dear members of the CRPD Committee,

My name is Marc Workman. I am here today on behalf of the World Blind Union (WBU). WBU is a global organization that represents the interests of over 253 million people who are blind or partially sighted. Our organization is committed to promoting the full inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society. In line with this commitment, WBU has submitted our views on the General Comment on Article 11 to this committee. In the time I have here today, I would like to emphasize three aspects of our submission.

One of the key issues regarding Article 11 is the importance of meaningful engagement with organizations of persons with disabilities. We strongly believe that the involvement of organizations of persons with disabilities is essential to ensuring that the needs and rights of persons with disabilities are taken into account in risk and humanitarian situations. This involvement must extend beyond mere consultation to include active participation in all aspects of the decision-making process. In many cases, an investment into building capacity of OPDs will be required before meaningful engagement is possible.

Another critical issue that we would like to raise as we near International Women’s Day is the increased vulnerability of women and girls with disabilities during times of emergency. Women and girls with disabilities often face intersecting forms of discrimination that can increase their vulnerability to violence, abuse, and exploitation. We urge the CRPD Committee to emphasize a gender-responsive approach in the General Comment on Article 11 and ensure that the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities are adequately addressed.

Finally, we would like to highlight the importance of accessibility when it comes to implementing Article 11. Persons with disabilities must have equal access to information, communication, and support services in all situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. This includes accessible formats of emergency communication, accessible transportation, and accessible shelters.

In conclusion, we believe that the implementation of Article 11 is critical to ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are protected in all situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies. We urge the CRPD Committee to ensure that the General Comment on Article 11 stresses the need for close consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, promotes a gender-responsive approach, and emphasizes the key role of accessibility. Thank you for your time and consideration.