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**Statement by**

**the Validity Foundation** **– Mental Disability Advocacy Centre**

**to be delivered during the Day of General Discussion on article 11 of the CRPD on 7 March 2023 in the regional segment for Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia under the topic “best practices to protect persons with disabilities and ensure their safety in situations of risks”.**

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# **Introduction**

1. Validity is an international human rights organisation that conducts a range of litigation and advocacy initiatives to promote and advance the rights of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.
2. In this oral statement, I would like to share a few testimonies about the experiences of persons with disabilities we gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic and would also like to mention some recommendations which should guide State responses.[[1]](#footnote-2)

# **Testimonies of persons with disabilities from Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

1. A **Greek** OPD described psychiatric institutions as

*hermetically sealed with more absolute restrictions than before, with no possibility of visits, with no advocacy services and with no independent monitoring.*

1. A person with disabilities from **India** highlighted:

*There isn’t enough information available to what is happening to persons with disabilities, the lockdown is making it impossible to step out and access information. It can be said that information is just not available either to or about persons with disabilities in this situation (…). Few things have been put up online at relevant govt portals but most persons with disabilities staying in institutions have no access to these.*

1. An OPD from **Kazakhstan** shared the following:

*With the locking down of the city and its infrastructure (…), many people were facing domestic violence. I think since social workers were not allowed to visit homes, this issue went out of control.*

1. A person with disabilities from the **Republic of Moldova** said:

*Children with disabilities did not have access to online education due to a lack of information technologies and internet access.*

1. A person with disabilities from **New Zealand** said:

*Isolation is their[Government’s] only solution but this does not work for those needing community supports to maintain independent living if you have no family or friends to rely on, and many community services were removed from people’s lives quickly as lockdown began.*

**Some proposed recommendations to the States Parties to the CRPD concerning persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

1. Validity proposes, amongst others, the following recommendations to the States Parties to the CRPD concerning persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies:
2. take concrete measures to protect the rights to life, health, freedom from all forms of abuse, inclusion in the community and education in ongoing recovery and response efforts;
3. enact emergency plans for deinstitutionalisation, including immediate measures to prevent new admissions into residential settings
4. guarantee non-discriminatory access to healthcare, and prevent discriminatory triage procedures;
5. enhance the direct involvement of persons with disabilities in response and recovery plans on a systematic basis;
6. prevent significant or fatal breakdown of community support;
7. make sure that information is available and accessible.

1. Testimonies were gathered, and recommendations were formulated by the COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor: <https://covid-drm.org> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)