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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 2)/Council  
No. prev. doc.: 5478/1/15 REV 1  
Subject: Draft Council conclusions on disability-inclusive disaster management  
- Adoption

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1. In the light of the outcome of the Presidency's workshop on the needs of persons with disabilities throughout the disaster management cycle, held in Riga on 12 and 13 January 2015, the Presidency drew up a set of draft Council conclusions on disability-inclusive disaster management.
2. These draft Council conclusions were examined by the Working Party on Civil Protection on 6 February 2015 and agreed at its meeting on 25 February 2015.
3. On this basis, the Permanent Representatives Committee is asked to agree on the text set out in the Annex and to submit it to the Council for adoption at a forthcoming meeting.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE DISASTER MANAGEMENT

1. Recalling Decision No 1313/2013/EU of 17 December 2013 on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism<sup>1</sup>, which lays down that the Mechanism should support, complement and facilitate coordination of Member States' action in pursuit of, *inter alia*, a specific objective - to increase public awareness and preparedness for disasters;
2. Underlining the legal obligations enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly with regard to Article 11 requesting the States Parties, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to take all the necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters;
3. Considering the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: a renewed commitment to a barrier-free Europe<sup>2</sup> which is aimed at raising awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities, including accessibility, in the area of emergency and humanitarian aid, as well as promoting the rights of people with disabilities in the external action of the EU and the Member States;
4. Recalling Article 19 of the European Parliament resolution of 4 September 2007 on natural disasters<sup>3</sup>, stressing the need to take special care of persons with disabilities in cases of natural disasters in all actions undertaken by the Civil Protection Mechanism;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 347 of 20.12.2013, p. 924.

<sup>2</sup> COM(2010) 636 final.

<sup>3</sup> P6\_TA(2007)0362.

5. Recalling Article 7 of Directive 2002/22/EC of 7 March 2002 on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communications networks and services (the Universal Service Directive)<sup>4</sup> stating that Member States should, where appropriate, take specific measures for disabled end-users in order to ensure access to publicly available telephone services, including emergency services, and Article 26 that states that Member States should ensure that access for disabled end-users to emergency services is equivalent to that enjoyed by other end-users;
6. Noting the Council conclusions of 5 June 2014 on the post-2015 Hyogo Framework for Action: Managing risks to achieve resilience<sup>5</sup>, according to which the new Framework should better target and empower the most vulnerable groups, *inter alia*, persons with disabilities; the outcome of the *Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR)*, to be held in Sendai, Japan, on 14-18 March 2015, should be taken into account;
7. Taking note of the outcome of the Presidency's workshop on the needs of persons with disabilities throughout the disaster management cycle, held in Riga, Latvia, on 12-13 January 2015;

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8. Highlights the need to apply the principle of non-discrimination and incorporate the diverse needs of persons with disabilities throughout the disaster management cycle (prevention, preparedness, response and recovery) and in this respect also refers to the principle of self-reliance, taking into account that persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable in times of disasters.
9. Notes that cooperation in disability-inclusive disaster management planning between local, regional and national authorities, as well as between non-governmental entities, should be enhanced, considering the cross-cutting nature of issues relating to persons with disabilities.

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<sup>4</sup> OJ L 108 of 24.4.2002, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> 9884/14.

10. Acknowledges the necessity to apply disability-inclusive approach to disaster management, taking into consideration the work done by the Member States, the United Nations, in particular United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the Council of Europe and other international bodies.
11. Highlights the actions undertaken by the Member States and the European Commission regarding disaster response outside the European Union and encourages the consideration of the needs of persons with disabilities whilst planning upcoming response activities.
12. In line with the EU's commitment to pay special attention to addressing specific needs of persons with disabilities, enshrined in the "The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid"<sup>6</sup> encourages further mainstreaming of the needs of persons with disabilities into the humanitarian response provided by the Member States and the European Union, *inter alia* in the framework of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.
13. Welcomes the use of new technologies for persons with disabilities throughout the disaster management cycle in Member States as good practice, and projects supported and implemented by the EU which are aimed at meeting the specific needs of persons with disabilities.

**Invites the Member States to:**

14. Reinforce the close cooperation at all levels between the civil protection authorities, the organisations representing persons with disabilities and other relevant civil society organisations with the aim of integrating, if necessary, the relevant aspects of needs of persons with disabilities into policy development as well as risk assessments, disaster management plans and other relevant instruments.

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<sup>6</sup> Joint Statement by the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, OJ C 25 of 30.1.2008, p. 1.

15. Foster the use of new technologies and innovative solutions in all phases of the disaster management cycle by taking into consideration the specific needs of persons with disabilities and, in particular, but not exclusively, by ensuring the accessibility of 112 emergency services and information related to preparedness for disasters, including early warning systems.
16. Consider further developing existing training and exercise programmes in order to ensure a disability-inclusive disaster management.
17. Provide knowledge and raise awareness among persons with disabilities regarding actions that should be taken in a risk situation or in the case of a disaster. Awareness raising can be facilitated by adapting :
  - existing national education programmes;
  - information campaigns on disaster preparedness;
  - exercises involving persons with disabilities;
  - early warning and
  - evacuation;thus strengthening the resilience to disasters and the self-reliance of persons with disabilities.
18. Take appropriate measures to raise public awareness regarding the action to be taken to assist persons with disabilities in a risk situation or in the case of a disaster.
19. Consider including psychosocial support to persons with disabilities in the recovery phase of the disasters.
20. Evaluate, where appropriate, existing national civil protection resources and relief items for their capacity to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities, thus enhancing the Union's planning and preparedness for disasters and ensuring that the Union's disaster response is adequate and comprehensive.

21. Consider including the disability factor in national disaster damage and loss data recording activities and use it for implementation of more targeted disaster risk reduction measures, together with the sharing of non-sensitive data with Member States and the Commission; use, *inter alia*, local-level authorities and non-governmental organisations representing persons with disabilities as a source of information.

**Invites the Commission to:**

22. Support the initiatives of the Member States aimed at developing and using new technologies, including accessibility of 112 emergency services and early warning systems, and at implementing innovative solutions, thereby addressing the challenges of disability-inclusive disaster management, *inter alia* by providing financing within the relevant existing EU funds.
23. Incorporate together with Member States the needs of persons with disabilities into relevant actions under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism, and promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in exercises, as appropriate.
24. Consider, together with the Member States, the need to exchange best practice with regard to persons with disabilities throughout the disaster management cycle, taking into account existing work in this area.
25. Consider the progress made in this area as part of an interim evaluation report on the application of the Decision on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism.