

Opening Speech

By Paola Albrito

On the post-2015 framework for DRR leading to the WCDRR

**At the Council of Europe (EUR-OPA) Conference on Including People with Disabilities
in Disaster Preparedness and Response**

4 December 2014

09.30 to 10.15

Dear Members of the Council of Europe, dear Eladio, dear colleagues, ladies and gentleman,

I am pleased to be here today at the Council of Europe conference on “Including People with Disabilities in Disaster Preparedness and Response”. The collaboration between the Council of Europe and UNISDR has been tremendous over the years in many different areas. But the topic of addressing vulnerable groups in DRR – and in particular people with disabilities – has been particularly important.

I am happy to see the great results that have already come out of this collaboration – specifically the guidelines and the report on the inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster preparedness and response, and the Council of Europe Voluntary Commitment towards the WCDRR. Moreover, the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union has expressed the wish to collaborate with UNISDR and the Council of Europe on the topic of people with disabilities and DRR. Specifically, in January 2015, the Latvian Presidency will host a dedicated workshop on the topic in Riga, and the outcomes of this workshop will result in Council Conclusions, which will then possibly feed into the post-2015 framework for DRR.

I am also happy to report that, in great part thanks to the engagement of EUR-OPA, this particular topic has now been embraced within the negotiations of the post-2015 framework for DRR and it will be part of the Third UN World Conference on DRR taking place in Sendai, Japan on 14-18 March 2015.

At the World Conference, PWDs will have a dedicated event entitled “Proactive Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction for All”, which will be part of the Multi-Stakeholder Segment. The session will look at the positive contribution of persons with disabilities to the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and the requirements to be set up to ensure the implementation of DRR for all. Based on successful experience and lessons learnt, the session will determine clear and practical recommendation to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk reduction at all levels and in all projects, contributing to strengthening the resilience of society. The session will also aim to strengthen partnerships among States, civil society organisations, experts and stakeholders through dialogues and discussions.

Furthermore, with the closing of the second Preparatory Committee two weeks ago in Geneva, Draft 1 of the post-2015 framework for DRR has been now released. During the so-called open-ended negotiations in December (8-10) and January (12-16) in Geneva (there is a possibility of further meetings as appropriate), member states, IGOs like the Council of Europe, and major groups will have the opportunity to provide further input in order finalize Draft 2 of the post-2015 framework for DRR by 31 January 2015. After that, the final negotiation meeting will take place on 13 March 2015 – the day right before the WCDRR.

All of this means that there is still ample opportunity to influence the post-2015 framework for DRR in regards to the inclusion of PWDs within the international agenda

on DRR. But let me just give you a few examples of the language quoted in Draft 1 of the post-2015 framework for DRR on vulnerable groups and people with disabilities:

“There has to be a broader and a more people–centered preventive approach to disaster risk exposure and vulnerability taking into consideration gender, age and disabilities...”

“Ensure the engagement of all stakeholders, including women, children and youth, persons with disabilities...”

“Ensure the full and meaningful participation of women, children and vulnerable groups in the disaster risk reduction decision–making process, and ensure practices are gender responsive.”

“The framework should be inclusive and non–discriminatory while paying special attention to the vulnerable groups.”

As you can see, PWDs are already well established within Draft 1 of the post-2015 framework for DRR. I believe the inclusion of such language in the post-2015 framework for DRR will not only ensure that PWDs are *considered* when it comes to DRR activities. This, of course, is important. However, it will also ensure that PWDs actually play an active role in decision-making and building resilience to disasters. PWDs are not, and should not, be considered passive victims in this process. Indeed we all need PWDs to be actively involved in disaster prevention, preparedness and response.

And in this sense, I would like to invite you to start thinking about how all of these great accomplishments that we have had on the topic of PWDs and DRR – the guidelines, the report, and the inclusion of topic in the post-2015 framework – will be implemented?

Thank you.

