



May 19, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We are writing on behalf of our organizations and others listed below, concerning the upcoming World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul.

The Summit represents a unique opportunity for The United States of America to champion disability inclusion in humanitarian action by endorsing a newly-developed Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (attached), that will be launched at the WHS Special Session on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, Monday May 23 from 4 to 5 PM.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in emergency response is a core component of principled and effective humanitarian action. It relates to humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality as well as human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination. Ensuring that one of the most at-risk populations have access to basic aid and specific services essential for their survival, protection and recovery requires deliberate action from the humanitarian community.

The Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action provides a framework to address this challenge. It has been developed by representatives from governments, international organisations, UN agencies, non governmental organisations including organisations of and representing persons with disabilities, through a multi-stakeholder, transparent and inclusive procedure. The Charter identifies five core elements of inclusive response and associated commitments to support humanitarian actors' practices to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities. The principles are: (1) non-discrimination, (2) participation, (3) inclusivity in policy development, (4) inclusivity in response and services, and (5) cooperation and coordination.

These core principles are fully consonant with the policy and practice of the United States Government in humanitarian action, which has emphasized inclusion of people with disabilities for many years.

We therefore urge the Government of the United States to maintain its strong leadership role on the inclusion of persons with disabilities by:

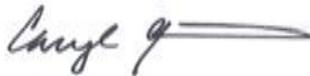
- **Formally endorsing the Charter on “Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action,”**
- **Participating in the WHS Special Session “Inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action,” on May 23 mentioned above, and**
- **Making specific U.S government commitments to implement the Charter. Stakeholder commitments will form the basis of an Action Plan that will guarantee the implementation of the Charter. In particular, we urge the United States to:**
 - **support the development and implementation of global guidelines on disability inclusion in humanitarian action to be initiated in 2016.**
 - **increase participation of persons with disabilities in decision making and planning processes of humanitarian programmes, including in relevant assessment and coordination mechanisms.**
 - **conduct a review of humanitarian policy and programmes with the aim of addressing gaps in terms of inclusion of persons with disabilities.**

We look forward to hearing from you and do not hesitate to contact us for more information about this vital initiative.

Kind regards,



Jeff Meer
Executive Director
Handicap International



Caryl Garcia
President and CEO
CBM



Sarah Costa
Executive Director
Women’s Refugee Commission



Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch



Vladimir Cuk
Executive Director
International Disability Alliance

Additional endorsing organizations: InterAction, International Foundation for Electoral Systems

Cc: Gayle Smith, Administrator USAID