**28th Session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**World Health Organization Statement**

**06 March 2023**

Chairperson, Members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen.

WHO is pleased to provide an update on activities to support and promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The world is witnessing more disasters, public health emergencies such as epidemics, wars and armed conflicts, and mass migration. These humanitarian emergencies are increasingly complex, frequent and cause significant impact on the lives of the affected populations.

WHO, as the responsible and accountable authority in emergency response under the International Health Regulations, recognizes a number of areas of action that should be strengthened in order to improve outcomes for persons with disabilities in humanitarian and emergency contexts. These include overall access to equitable, affordable and quality health services, including rehabilitation, assistive technology and mental health.

At the 74th World Health Assembly, member states adopted a resolution on “The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities”. The resolution provided WHO with a mandate to continue its commitment to address health equity for persons with disabilities, including in humanitarian contexts.

As requested by the Resolution, WHO developed a Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities which analyses the contributing factors and outlines actions and recommendations to reduce health inequities. WHO is currently developing a national strategic planning tool to support countries to systematically identify and implement actions that advance disability inclusion in universal health coverage, public health interventions and health emergency responses.

In addition, WHO has continued its technical support to countries in the collection of valid and reliable data on disability. In 2022, WHO supported the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia in the implementation of the WHO Model Disability Survey at national level. The data generated with the survey will be used to guide policy development and planning of public health actions and services, and to monitor progress towards the SDGs and implementation of the CRPD.

In terms of rehabilitation, WHO has invested in strengthening rehabilitation in emergencies through its integration in Emergency Medical Teams, and increasingly by providing direct technical support and coordination of rehabilitation actions in major responses. In the past 12 months, this has included the war in Ukraine and at this very moment in the earthquake response in Türkiye and Syria. We recognise though that there remain significant barriers to including rehabilitation in emergency responses, and that greater national rehabilitation preparedness is the key to improving access. Only then can we realise article 26 of the UNCRPD – ensuring that rehabilitation begins at the earliest possible stage, including in emergencies. To this end, in January 2023, the WHO executive board approved its first ever resolution on rehabilitation, which called on member states “to ensure timely integration of rehabilitation in emergency preparedness and response”. Our work to support the implementation of this resolution is already underway.

WHO has made a high-level political commitment to include assistive technology in emergency response. The 2018 World Health Assembly Resolution on improving access to assistive technology, specifically urges Member States to promote the inclusion of priority assistive products and inclusive barrier-free environments within emergency preparedness and response programmes. In response to the ongoing war in Ukraine, WHO has provided technical support to the Ministry of Health to roll out two priority assistive products kits. To date 3900 assistive products have been procured and supplied to clinics in Eastern Ukraine. By 31 January 2023, 80 personnel and 18 mentors had been trained and are competent to provide assistive products. This work has contributed to improved outcomes for the thousands, with over 2,200 people receiving the assistive products they need through these kits. The experiences from the Ukraine response have also informed the ongoing assistive technology response in whole of Syria.

In terms of mental health, in 2022, WHO, Médecins Sans Frontiers, Humanity and Inclusion and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee embarked on a collaboration to introduce the WHO QualityRights training on mental health, human rights, recovery and inclusion into humanitarian and emergency responses and contexts. Building off existing WHO QualityRights training tools and programmes, new training content is being developed for humanitarian settings, including exercises, videos, case scenarios, presentations and other elements capturing the humanitarian context and realities. Two QualityRights Humanitarian training workshops have been undertaken - the first one in June 2022 and the second in November 2022 - in order to deepen the knowledge and skills of humanitarian workers in the field on the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities in line with the CRPD, as well as build capacities to promote recovery and inclusion in these contexts.

We thank the Committee once again for this opportunity. WHO looks forward to continuing its work to support and promote the CRPD.

Thank you.