

PAKISTAN

Miscellaneous Statements

CRPD, A/66/55 (2011)

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Chapter II. Organizational and Other Matters

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J. Statements of the Committee

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35. In October 2010, the Chairpersons of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted a joint statement on the Pakistan floods. The statement is contained in annex XIV to the present report.

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Annex XIV

Joint statement by the Chairpersons of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, on the Pakistan floods

27 October 2010

1. Pakistan has recently been gravely affected by the worst monsoon flooding in a century. At least 1,600 persons have died and over 2,000 persons injured. The number of people directly affected by the floods stands at 20.2 million, with over 1.9 million houses reportedly damaged or destroyed, and women and girls comprising 85 per cent of the persons displaced by the floods. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities express profound concern about the impact of the floods in Pakistan on the enjoyment of human rights and extend their deepest sympathy for the victims of the floods.

2. The Committees have noted with alarm the reported gaps in provision of relief and registration of the affected families for financial assistance. They note that members of minority communities, Afghan refugees, women, children and persons with disabilities, particularly those living in rural areas, were already among the most vulnerable in Pakistani society. The floods have

disproportionately affected them.

3. The Committees commend the authorities and relief agencies for their extraordinary efforts to bring relief to the victims and, at the same time, urge them to strengthen the human rights-based approach of their efforts, in order to prevent further victimization of the affected population. This calls for special measures to prevent discrimination and protect the most vulnerable, active vigilance regarding human rights violations and the establishment of channels of participation for all affected persons in the decisions now being taken towards long-term recovery.

4. In particular, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women notes with alarm that 85 per cent of persons displaced by the flood are women and children. Of that percentage, 500,000 women are pregnant. Each day 1,700 women go into labour and hundreds will experience complications requiring lifesaving medical intervention. Maternal mortality is high in Pakistan and the numbers will rise due to lack of medical facilities (over 200 hospitals and clinics in the effected areas have been destroyed), and the absence of female health-care workers (many Pakistani women will not receive care from a male medical worker owing to cultural and religious beliefs). In addition, a lack of proper nutrition and clean water in the camps for internally displaced persons will have dire effects on women, especially those breast-feeding, and on their children. As the floodwaters rise, they are at acute risk from starvation, exposure, disease, sexual assault, violence and trafficking. The Committee calls upon the Pakistani authorities and relief agencies to take concrete measures with respect to all of the Committee's concerns, including measures to prevent sexual and physical abuse and trafficking of girls and women. The Committee also urges authorities and aid agencies to combat any constraints women and girls may face from accessing basic services or humanitarian aid, including cultural barriers.

5. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expresses concern about the very high infant and under-5 mortality rates in Pakistan, with an estimated 500,000 under-5 infant deaths each year due to preventable causes. It is deeply concerned that the floods are worsening infant and child mortality. The Committee on the Rights of the Child is further concerned at the breakdown of communication and infrastructure in the north-western area of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkwa province, an area of pre-existing conflict, where women and especially girls are known to have been denied access to basic health and education services. The Committee expresses deep concern at the heightened risk that girls be discriminated against, sexually abused and trafficked. The Committee urges authorities and all persons involved with relief and humanitarian assistance to heighten their efforts to reach the youngest children and those most difficult to reach. Girls and children with disabilities should be the utmost priority.

6. The Committee on the Rights of the Child calls for special measures to be taken to ensure that the poor birth registration rate in Pakistan, which was noted by the Committee in 2009, does not further prevent children from accessing relief aid, health, education and other essential services. The Committee stresses that the children now being born must not be denied their right to birth registration due to the requirement on the parents to first prove Pakistani citizenship. The Committee urges authorities and all persons involved with relief and humanitarian assistance to heighten their efforts to reach the youngest, the most hard to reach children, girls and children with disabilities as

their utmost priority.

7. Special attention must be paid to particularly vulnerable persons. Among them, persons with disabilities are often a part of society that is kept invisible, even under normal circumstances and more so in times of emergency. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calls upon the authorities to ensure the full rights of persons with disabilities to security and protection, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including by: urgently locating affected persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities; facilitating reunification with their families; and ensuring access to water, food, medical services, technical assistance, and rehabilitation, as well as to information during the emergency so allow the normalization of their lives as soon as possible. The Committee calls upon Pakistan to address accessibility requirements in the reconstruction of housing and public spaces, in the resumption of education processes, and in the integration of persons with disabilities in the labour force and in social security schemes. In this regard, the Committee also calls for international cooperation (art. 32 of the Convention) toward the realization of these objectives, in favour of persons with disabilities.

8. Pakistan is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The expert committees monitoring these conventions issued this joint statement during their respective sessions held simultaneously in Geneva in October 2010.