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**Statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the Charter on
Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action**

**Delivered by H.E. Ms. Heidi Schroderus-Fox,
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Length: 5 minutes

Chair, High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of countries supporting the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

Persons with disabilities are the world's largest minority. Over one billion people, or some 16 % of the world's population are persons with disabilities, and this proportion increases sharply in conflicts and emergencies. Furthermore, persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by humanitarian crises and face significant barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance.

This Geneva-based Group of Friends was established to amplify the voices of marginalised people often left behind. Our story goes back to the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 and the launch of the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. This was the first time when

humanitarian actors and UN member states came together to comprehensively discuss disability inclusion and committed to its advancement.

Since then, the Group of Friends has played an active role in promoting disability inclusion in the humanitarian architecture and the UN system more broadly. Our advocacy efforts contributed to the launch of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy in 2019 which today provides the foundation for progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the UN.

Another milestone was the launch of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Guidelines for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities which set out concrete actions for humanitarian actors to more effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities.

Humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, are today more committed and better equipped to identify the needs of persons with disabilities. However, much more needs to be done to achieve protection and assistance of persons with disabilities on the ground.

Given the growing gap between humanitarian needs and available funding, ensuring that humanitarian responses are inclusive of persons in the most vulnerable situation is an essential and key element of effective humanitarian action.

Humanitarian responses are often designed to provide standardised solutions to displaced and host communities without sufficiently addressing the potential

barriers faced by persons with disabilities. A principled and effective response to displacement must identify and address these barriers.

The Group of Friends looks forward to the Global Refugee Forum as an opportunity to further strengthen the inclusion of displaced and stateless persons with disabilities in humanitarian action.

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, we encourage UNHCR and all stakeholders to proactively support the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities at the GRF.

First, it will be critical for UNHCR to ensure that the venue and related information and communication are accessible to persons with disabilities. This is fundamental to inclusion, and enables the voices of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations to be heard – in plenary, in side events and throughout the GRF.

Second, we stand ready to support all stakeholders to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities through new and emerging pledging frameworks. We encourage everyone to consider two key questions as pledges are developed:

- *is there a way to make this pledge more inclusive of persons with disabilities?*
- *is there a specific approach to support persons with disabilities through targeted measures in this pledge?*

We also wish to emphasize that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are at best place to support development, implementation and monitoring of inclusive pledges

Beyond the GRF, the Group of Friends will continue to promote disability inclusion as an essential and key element of effective humanitarian action, and for the humanitarian system to move beyond ad hoc efforts towards more systematic models of inclusion that are embedded within humanitarian policies and practices.

I thank you.