

Global Refugee Forum 17.-18.12.2019
High-level dialogue on protection capacity

Statement by Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs
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Chair, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

Being forced to leave their homes, often restricts people's ability to realise their rights. They are left without protection, maybe due to a lack of sufficient documentation and struggle to lead a normal life. The situation is even worse for persons with disabilities, who may already struggle to access education, healthcare or obtain a job under normal circumstances. In a crisis this may in fact become impossible. Unfortunately, persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls, are still routinely left behind in global humanitarian programmes and policy frameworks.

With this in mind, it was quite clear to us that Finland would like to take on the role of a co-sponsor of this theme. The inclusion of persons with disabilities from the start of a comprehensive refugee response is well recognized in the Global Compact on Refugees, but we want to take the thinking further and have us all consider the intersectionality of inclusiveness. When we speak of women and girls, do we also consider women and girls with disability? When we speak of children, do we also take into account the needs of children with disabilities? What about the elderly – are we ensuring that services and facilities are by design, inclusive?

The IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action were published last month. For us, this was an important achievement as Finland advocated for and financed these guidelines. They are the first humanitarian guidelines developed with and by persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, together with other stakeholders. They set out essential actions that humanitarian actors must take in order to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Still, they are only the first step. Now we must turn this guidance into action, in order to achieve tangible results.

Finland has previously supported UNHCR in the area of disability inclusion, by financing a disability advisor for two years. Based on our lessons learned, Finland is pledging in this Forum to support UNHCR through enhanced technical capacity in the form of a Junior Professional Officer. We are convinced that the incumbent will effectively support UNHCR's country operations widely and facilitate the adoption of good practices within and between offices.

Strengthening the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development and humanitarian action is a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring that the principles of Leaving No One Behind and Reaching the Furthest Behind First are fully realised. We see UNHCR committed to ensuring more predictable support and solutions for refugees and those affected. As Finland, we wish to be part of this process and contribute to enhancing protection capacity to the best of our ability.

Thank you.