



Permanent Mission of Italy
UN - Geneva



Croce Rossa Italiana

Expert Meeting on the Draft General Comments on Article 11 of the CRPD

Geneva, 6th July 2026, 9.30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

IFRC Secretariat - Chemin des Crêts 17, Petit-Saconnex, 1209 Geneva, Switzerland

Chair's Summary

This Chair's Summary has been prepared under the sole responsibility of the organisers. It aims to provide a summary of the discussions held during the Expert Meeting. The meeting was conducted under Chatham House Rules and, accordingly, no statements or views are attributed to individual participants, nor does the present Summary purport to reflect agreed conclusions or a consensus among participants. Rather, it seeks to capture the principal themes and observations that emerged during the discussions, as a contribution to the ongoing consultation process of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The organisers express their appreciation to all participants for their valuable contributions and engagement throughout the meeting.

1. Introduction

The Expert Meeting on the **Draft General Comments on Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (CRPD) was convened on 6th July 2026 at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies HQ in Geneva. The meeting has been organised by the Permanent Mission of Italy and the Italian Red Cross, with the support of Roma Tre University, **as part of the implementation of the pledge "[Enhance the protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities in situations of armed conflict and disasters](#)"**, presented at the 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in October 2024.

The meeting brought together **approximately 40 experts** from States, United Nations entities, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academia, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and civil society. It focused on the two [draft General Comments on Article 11](#) of the Convention, released by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD Committee) on 27 May 2026, namely:

- **Draft General Comment No. 9** on the obligations of States Parties in situations of risk, and
- **Draft General Comment No. 10** on addressing the impact of situations of risk.

The discussions provided an opportunity to exchange views on the two draft General Comments and contribute to the CRPD Committee's ongoing public consultation process. Participants explored legal, policy and operational aspects of the implementation of Article 11 in situations of risk,

including armed conflict, disasters and humanitarian emergencies, and identified areas where the draft texts could be further clarified or strengthened to better support their implementation by States and other relevant stakeholders.

2. General observations

The discussions reflected the **multidisciplinary nature of the meeting**, bringing together perspectives from international human rights law (IHRL), international humanitarian law (IHL), disaster risk reduction (DRR), humanitarian action and practice. While participants approached the draft General Comments from different professional backgrounds and areas of expertise, the exchanges remained focused on identifying ways to strengthen the legal clarity, coherence and practical value of the two texts. Discussions **combined conceptual reflections with operational experience**, drawing on examples from humanitarian response, DRR, military practice and the implementation of the CRPD at national and international levels.

A first recurring theme concerned the **relationship between the two draft General Comments**. Several participants observed that **the two documents lack effective coordination and present several overlaps**. The current approach has been identified as potentially able to create uncertainty for States and practitioners seeking to use the General Comments as practical guidance. **Several participants called for the elaboration of a single consolidated General Comment** which might ultimately provide greater clarity to relevant stakeholders. In case the CRPD Committee would finally prefer two separate documents, participants recommended to arrange a **clear separation of focuses between the two documents**, through texts devoted to the interpretation of obligations arising from Article 11 from implementation measures (with the need to adopt a comprehensive approach related to implementation measures relevant for the different scenarios provided by Article 11), or a common introductory section explaining their respective scope, relationship and complementary function and avoid overlaps.

The **operational value of the draft General Comments** emerged as another cross-cutting issue throughout the discussions. A number of participants considered that the drafts would benefit from moving beyond broad statements of principle by providing **more concrete examples** to support implementation in practice. Several interventions encouraged greater reliance on existing international standards, humanitarian guidance documents, such as the [IASC Guidelines, Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action \(2019\)](#), and examples of good practice, including relevant case-law of the CRPD, DRR frameworks and established international humanitarian law practice, where these could assist States and other stakeholders in translating the CRPD's obligations into concrete measures and ensure greater coherence with existing international legal and policy frameworks. The objective, as reflected in several interventions, was not to expand the scope of the General Comments, but to reinforce their usefulness as practical reference documents.

Finally, participants consistently emphasised the importance of recognising persons with disabilities not only as rights holders requiring protection but also as **active participants in preparedness, response and recovery efforts**. Several interventions recalled that the principle of meaningful participation should inform both the drafting of the General Comments and the implementation of Article 11 more broadly. Participants emphasised the contribution of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to policy development, operational planning and humanitarian action, reaffirming

that disability-inclusive responses should be developed with, and not only for, persons with disabilities.

3. Discussion on Draft General Comment No. 9

Participants commented on a broad range of provisions of Draft General Comment No. 9. For ease of reference, the observations below are organised around the main topics that emerged during the discussion rather than following the structure of the draft General Comment.

Several participants commented on the draft's **conceptual framework and terminology**. Particular attention was devoted to the proposed definition of **ableism**, with several interventions suggesting that it would benefit from greater conceptual clarity to facilitate its consistent interpretation and application across different legal and operational contexts, particularly by audiences beyond the disability community. Related observations concerned the treatment of **intersectionality** and the importance of ensuring that key concepts are used consistently throughout the text, also in light of overlapping sections on these aspects in the two documents.

One of the most extensively discussed issues concerned the **relationship between the CRPD and IHL**. Participants broadly welcomed the draft's recognition that Article 11 does not create new obligations, but rather requires existing obligations under IHRL and IHL to be implemented in a disability-inclusive manner. This was seen as one of the **distinctive features of Article 11, whose explicit reference to IHL** provides a unique opportunity to strengthen its interpretation through the lens of disability inclusion, not by establishing a hierarchy between legal regimes, but by promoting their **complementarity and harmonisation**. Some participants underlined the risk that the current text could be perceived as an attempt to **downplay the role of IHL in such scenarios**, rather than as promoting a disability-inclusive interpretation of its principles and norms. In this regard, some participants have underlined how certain solutions adopted in the text are not consistent with IHL principles and definitions.

Several participants expressed reservations regarding the draft's **characterization of the CRPD as the *lex specialis* in situations of armed conflict**, observing that this formulation does not accurately reflect the relationship between the two frameworks and risks being legally contested and strategically counterproductive. Participants encouraged the CRPD Committee to further expand the idea of **Article 11 as a bridge between the CRPD and IHL**, demonstrating how disability-inclusive interpretations of existing IHL obligations can reinforce the protection afforded by the Convention, while avoiding language that could be understood as subordinating or replacing IHL.

Participants also devoted specific attention to **situations of military occupation**, which several experts considered insufficiently addressed in the current draft despite representing one of the most significant contexts for the interaction between IHL and the CRPD. It was observed that occupation is precisely the setting where the Occupying Power exercises governmental authority over the occupied population, creating obligations that closely parallel those of States Parties under the CRPD.

Several interventions also drew attention to the **treatment of the conduct of hostilities**, considering that the General Comment should more explicitly integrate disability considerations into the IHL principles of proportionality, precautions in attack - including target verification and the choice of means and methods of warfare - and precautions against the effects of attacks – including evacuations.

It was suggested that **these obligations should be addressed across the full operational cycle**, including through the integration of disability considerations into rules of engagement, targeting processes, civil-military coordination mechanisms and the training of armed forces. In specific relation to evacuations, as for references to concrete measures, proposals included: providing evacuation information in accessible formats, using a variety of communication methods; identifying individuals and local actors capable of supporting persons with disabilities in adopting the most appropriate behaviour during an evacuation; ensuring the involvement of OPDs and local authorities, including for the collection of first-hand information, statistics, and data useful for planning and implementing evacuation operations.

Furthermore, participants highlighted the need for **further guidance and analysis in areas of IHL** related to the protection of persons in armed conflict, particularly **detention** and **humanitarian assistance**. In these cases, suggestions were made to draw more extensively on the Geneva Conventions and their updated ICRC Commentaries to strengthen the operational guidance contained in the document. Attention was drawn on accessibility of persons with disabilities to detention centres and participation in the life and activities thereof through an equal access to different areas and services, including restrooms, or the provision of facilities such as ramps, handrails, accessible corridors, and wide doorways. The discussion also addressed the draft's treatment of isolation in cases of mental illness. Participants suggested drawing more extensively on the updated ICRC Commentaries to the Geneva Conventions in order to reflect more recent interpretations and guidance on the issue.

Several experts further observed that the draft would benefit from **more systematic engagement with existing IHL doctrine, practice and operational guidance**. Particular reference was made to the updated ICRC Commentaries to the Geneva Conventions, contemporary military manuals and other existing guidance documents reflecting disability-inclusive interpretations of IHL, which could strengthen both the legal accuracy and operational consistency of the General Comment. Indeed, drawing on these sources was considered likely to enhance the practical relevance of the General Comment, while ensuring consistency with established IHL terminology and concepts, including by using commonly acknowledged formulations such as the obligation to take all feasible precautions.

Another major theme concerned the **analysis of disasters and DRR**. Across the discussion, participants welcomed the attention devoted to disasters in the draft but considered that the current text places greater emphasis on emergency response than on the broader continuum of measures required before, during and after situations of risk. Several interventions encouraged the CRPD Committee to adopt a **more comprehensive approach encompassing prevention, preparedness, response and recovery**, while recognising that many of the factors determining the safety of persons with disabilities are shaped well before a disaster or humanitarian emergency occurs through structural discrimination, inaccessible environments and exclusion.

Additionally, reference was made to **the need for the text to take into account the current practice of the CRPD Committee in its concluding observations on States parties' reports**, in which the Committee has already identified a range of relevant measures that States should adopt in relation to disasters. Some participants underlined how the current text does not pay attention to issues routinely analysed by the Committee, such as the need to guarantee proper information, accessible infrastructures, and early warning systems tailored for persons with disabilities, to facilitate

reconstruction activities aimed at including accessibility standards and universal design in post-disaster programmes, as well as the collection and analysis of disaggregated data in relation to persons with disabilities in disaster contexts.

Closely linked to this discussion was the **interpretation of the notion of "situations of risk"**, which some participants regarded as the central organising concept of Article 11. It was observed that the draft tends to focus predominantly on the examples listed in the provision, rather than on the broader concept of risk itself. The CRPD Committee was encouraged to **further develop this concept by drawing on existing international frameworks and agreed terminology**, thereby clarifying the temporal scope of States Parties' obligations and reinforcing the importance of prevention, preparedness and risk assessment alongside response and recovery. Some experts also encouraged greater recognition of slow-onset disasters, climate change and technological hazards, reflecting the evolving multi-hazard understanding of disaster risk in contemporary international practice.

The discussion highlighted the **importance of aligning the draft more closely with existing international DRR frameworks and guidance**. Particular reference was made to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the agreed UNDRR terminology, the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the Global Compact on Refugees, relevant international disaster law instruments and, where relevant, other complementary international frameworks.

Further observations concerned the **practical tools available for identifying and supporting persons with disabilities in humanitarian settings**. Participants encouraged explicit reference to the Washington Group Questions on Disability as a rights-based tool for disability-disaggregated data collection, already integrated into refugee registration systems and with potential for broader application at the national level. The discussion also highlighted the importance of ensuring accessible information and communication on asylum procedures and of working in partnership with OPDs in the assessment, design and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

With regard to the **obligations of non-State actors**, participants welcomed the inclusion of a dedicated section, noting that this is relatively uncommon in human rights documents. At the same time, several interventions called for greater clarity and differentiation between obligations applicable to non-State armed groups, in particular those specific to groups exercising de facto governmental authority over territory, and those that cannot realistically apply to non-State actors. Participants cautioned that unrealistic obligations may undermine compliance with those that are in fact capable of implementation. It was also suggested that the section should more explicitly cross-reference IHL obligations applicable to all parties to a conflict as the text does not clearly identify whether measures required to States in previous sections are also relevant in this context.

4. Discussion on Draft General Comment No. 10

Participants commented on a broad range of provisions of Draft General Comment No. 10. For ease of reference, the observations below are organised around the main topics that emerged during the discussion rather than following the structure of the draft General Comment.

Participants broadly welcomed the objective of Draft General Comment No. 10, considering it a timely and necessary contribution to the operational implementation of Article 11. At the same time,

several interventions observed that **the distinction between Draft General Comment No. 9 and Draft General Comment No. 10 would benefit from further clarification**, as a number of issues, including national strategies, specific implementation measures and State obligations, appear across both texts. Some participants therefore encouraged the CRPD Committee to more clearly articulate the respective purpose and scope of each document, while ensuring greater consistency between them or to elaborate a single General Comment on Article 11 able to better harmonise elements present in the current texts and avoid overlaps or gaps.

One of the main themes emerging from the discussion concerned the **need to strengthen the practical value** of the General Comment. While participants welcomed the identification of specific obligations and implementation measures, several interventions considered that many recommendations remain framed as a reiteration of the core human rights provisions of the CRPD, not specifically tailored for situations of risk. The CRPD Committee was therefore encouraged to **include more concrete examples of measures** that States Parties could adopt in practice, drawing where appropriate on its own case-law, the work of other treaty bodies and existing international guidance. Similarly, several participants underlined that **the current text**, and many of the measures recommended to States, **appear to be essentially tailored to situations of disasters and humanitarian emergencies, without sufficiently addressing or distinguishing the specific context of armed conflicts**, thus not reflecting the spectrum of hypotheses encompassed by Article 11.

Several interventions identified **a number of specific areas that would benefit from further development within the draft**. Suggestions included broadening the range of CRPD rights examined in the section on standards of protection, strengthening references to climate change, older persons, care institutions and indigenous peoples where relevant, and ensuring more systematic references to existing General Comments of the CRPD Committee and international jurisprudence.

Several interventions also encouraged a **more comprehensive approach to implementation by recognising the diversity of actors involved in situations of risk**. While reaffirming that States Parties remain the primary duty bearers under the Convention, participants observed that, in humanitarian settings, **implementation often depends on a broader range of actors**, including UN entities, humanitarian organizations, *de facto* authorities, civil society organizations and the private sector. Greater recognition of their respective roles and responsibilities, particularly in coordination, service delivery and humanitarian programming, was considered likely to strengthen the operational relevance of the General Comment.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion concerned **coordination and governance**. Participants emphasised that disability inclusion should not be treated solely as a protection issue but should be **mainstreamed across humanitarian coordination structures, sectoral responses and national preparedness systems**. Particular attention was devoted to the importance of ensuring that disability inclusion is reflected across all sectors, including health, shelter, education, food security, WASH and protection, and embedded within existing coordination mechanisms. Related observations highlighted the **importance of allocating adequate resources, strengthening institutional capacities** and ensuring that OPDs participate meaningfully in coordination and decision-making processes.

The discussion also placed considerable emphasis on **participation and accountability**. Participants welcomed the draft's recognition of the role of OPDs, while **encouraging stronger references to their leadership in preparedness, response, monitoring and recovery**. Several interventions also called for greater attention to data collection, monitoring mechanisms and accountability processes, including by strengthening existing humanitarian monitoring systems to ensure that they systematically capture the situation of persons with disabilities rather than creating parallel mechanisms wherever possible.

A number of participants further encouraged **closer alignment with existing international humanitarian and disaster-related frameworks**. References were made to the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, the IASC Protection Policy, relevant guidance adopted by other treaty bodies and existing humanitarian coordination arrangements. Drawing more systematically on these instruments was considered likely to strengthen the consistency and practical applicability of the General Comment while facilitating its implementation by humanitarian practitioners.

Annex I

Agenda

09:00 - 09:30 *Welcome Coffee*

09:30 - 09:45 Welcome remarks and introduction to the Expert Meeting

Chair: Cristina Azzarello, Humanitarian Affairs and Migration Adviser, Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, Geneva

- Stephen Wainwright, Technical Coordinator, Protection, Gender, and Inclusion, IFRC
- Stefano Pisotti, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN, Geneva;
- Rosemary Kayess, Member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

09:45 - 11:30 Analysis of ‘No. 1 Draft General Comment on the obligations of States parties in situation of risk’

Chair: Giulio Bartolini, Full professor of international law, Roma Tre University, Chair of the Scientific Committee, IHL Section, Italian Red Cross

- *I. Introduction; II. Risk-based obligations and their implications for the rights of persons with disabilities; III. Ableism Enhances Risk; IV. Intersectionality Heightens Risk; V. Protection not paternalism; VI. Complementarity (paras. 1-26)* - Sebastien Jodoin, Associate Professor, McGill University;
- *VII. Obligations of States parties. a) Armed Conflicts (paras. 27-43)* - Gloria Gaggioli, Full Professor of International Law, Geneva University;
- *VII. Obligations of States parties. b) Humanitarian Emergencies and Disasters (paras. 44-56)* - Natalie Baird, Professor of Law, University of Canterbury;
- *VIII. Obligations of non-State actors (paras. 57-68)* - Marco Sassòli, former Full Professor of International Law, Geneva University

Open discussion

11.30 - 11.45 *Coffee-Break*

11.45 - 12.50 Analysis of ‘No. 2 Draft General Comment addressing the impact of situations of risk’

Chair: Tommaso Natoli, Head of Humanitarian Diplomacy and International Law, Italian Red Cross

- *I. Introduction; II. Key Principles and Standards of the Convention in relation to persons with disabilities in situations of risk: Sections A (Overview), B. Principles of overarching relevance; C. Intersectionality (paras. 1-35)* - Susan Breau, Professor of International Law, School of Advanced Studies, University of London
- *III. Specific standards of protection (paras. 36-42)* - Giuseppe Palmisano, Full Professor of International Law Roma Tre University, Member CESC
- *IV National Strategies for Protection (paras. 43-51)* - Ulrike Last, Humanity & Inclusion (HI), Policy & Development Lead Inclusive Humanitarian Action, Protection and Governance

Open discussion

12.50 - 13.00 Concluding remarks and the way forward

- Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Annex II

List of Participants

- Ms Cristina Azzarello, Humanitarian Affairs and Migration Adviser, Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, Geneva
- Ms Natalie Baird, Professor of Law, University of Canterbury
- Col. Géry Balcersky, Deputy Director of the Military Department, Sanremo International Institute of Humanitarian Law
- Mr Giulio Bartolini, Full professor of international law, Roma Tre University, Chair of the Scientific Committee, IHL Section, Italian Red Cross
- Mr Gianluca Beruto, Secretary General and Director of Special Projects, Sanremo International Institute of Humanitarian Law
- Ms Susan Breau, Professor of International Law, School of Advanced Studies, University of London
- Ms Ximena Sotes Brito, Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN, Geneva
- Ms Milena Buffoni, Intern, Permanent Mission of Italy to the UN, Geneva
- Lt. Col. Ilaria Danese, Italian Ministry of Defense, Defense General Staff, General Office of Legal Affairs, Head of IHL Section
- Mr. Oscar Enrique Fernandez, Head of International Humanitarian Law and Humanitarian Diplomacy, Honduran Red Cross
- Ms Stefanie Dannenmann-Di Palma, External Relations Officer, UNDRR
- Ms Gloria Gaggioli, Full Professor of International Law, Geneva University
- Ms Heba Hagrass, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Ms Franca Iannaccio, Civil Protection Department, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- Ms Maria Ibáñez Beltrán, Permanent Mission of Spain to the UN, Geneva
- Ms Tomoko Ishihara, Protection Officer, Accountability to Affected People (AAP), Gender Equality and Inclusion Unit, UNHCR
- Ms Nuška Jerman, Legal Adviser, Slovenian Red Cross
- Mr Sebastien Jodoin, Associate Professor, McGill University
- Ms Isabella Karvinen, Associate Expert in IASC Secretariat
- Ms Mateja Kavaš, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the UN, Geneva
- Ms Rosemary Kayess, Member Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Ms Kirstin Lange, Consultant, UNICEF
- Ms Ulrike Last, Humanity & Inclusion (HI), Policy & Development Lead Inclusive Humanitarian Action, Protection and Governance
- Mr Marco Leonardi, Civil Protection Department, Presidency of the Council of Ministers
- Ms Janet Lord, Senior Research Fellow, Harvard Law School Project on Disability
- Ms Giulia Marcucci, Humanitarian Diplomacy Officer, Italian Red Cross
- Mr David Julian Jara Moreno, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the UN, Geneva
- Mr Tommaso Natoli, Head of Humanitarian Diplomacy and International Law, Italian Red Cross
- Mr Giuseppe Palmisano, Full Professor of International Law Roma Tre University, Member CESCR
- Ms Catherine Pedreros, Secretariat of the CRPD Committee
- Mr Juan Ignacio Pérez Bello, Senior Human Rights Advisor for Treaty Bodies, International Disability Alliance
- Ms Cristiana Pizzi, Department for Policies for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry for Disabilities
- Mr William Pons, Researcher and Practitioner on Disability and International Criminal Law
- Ms Hristina Pradal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- Ms Alicia Riouxhine-Issa, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN, Geneva

- Mr Marco Sassòli, Emeritus Professor of International Law, Geneva University
- Ms Oriana Sciortino, Department for Policies for Persons with Disabilities, Ministry for Disabilities
- Ms Heini Stolzenburg, Permanent Mission of Finland, Geneva
- Ms Julie Tenenbaum, Regional Legal Adviser, ICRC Paris delegation
- Mr Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UNDRR
- Mr Stephen Wainwright, Technical Coordinator, Protection, Gender, and Inclusion, IFRC