



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

20 April 2020

Dear Mr. Kaiser,

I write to thank you for your letter dated 30 March 2020, sent on behalf of the Thematic Group on Disaster Risk Reduction, regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 response.

The United Nations recognizes that persons with disabilities face particular and disproportionate risks from COVID-19, whether in developing or developed countries. In the immediate response, as well as in recovery and rebuilding, our efforts must strive to be inclusive of and accessible to all persons with disabilities.

In June 2019, I launched the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, and appointed Under-Secretary-General Ana Maria Menéndez, my Senior Adviser on Policy, to coordinate its system-wide implementation. The Strategy is my commitment to building an inclusive and sustainable society for persons with disabilities. It is also my commitment that the United Nations leads by example on disability inclusion. This encompasses the COVID-19 response.

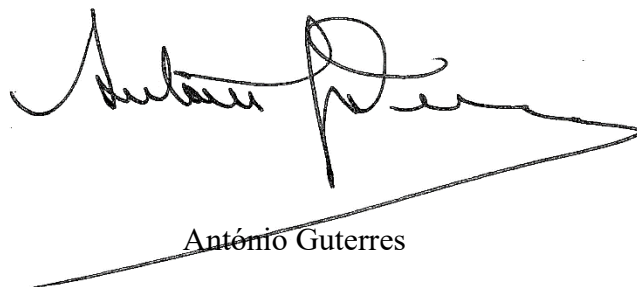
Under-Secretary-General Menéndez is closely involved in this process on my behalf, working with our entities, including the World Health Organization and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to promote a coordinated and comprehensive response inclusive of persons with disabilities. The Global Humanitarian Response Plan on COVID-19 launched earlier this month refers to the situation of persons with disabilities and, while launching the appeal, I highlighted the need to save the lives and to protect the future of populations that are most at risk, including persons with disabilities.

Mr. Carlos Kaiser
Global Focal Point
Thematic Group on Disability Disaster
Risk Reduction
Santiago

However, as I noted when launching the Strategy, we face significant challenges – for example, gaps in our work and an unevenness in our approach to disability inclusion – that must be confronted head-on. We have a long way to go. And this will only be achieved with the full participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations.

I therefore wish to sincerely thank the Thematic Group for your clear message on the importance of ensuring that persons with disabilities are not left behind in the COVID-19 response. My team and I will remain abreast of the situation faced by persons with disabilities and urge their inclusion in the United Nations system-wide response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'António Guterres', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a long, thin horizontal line that tapers to a point on the right side.

António Guterres