

25<sup>th</sup> September 2024

## Disabled people and the climate emergency

*Dear COP 29 Representatives,*

*"We are still failing people with disabilities, especially multiple marginalized people, before, during and after disasters," Marcie Roth, CEO of the World Institute on Disability.*

I am writing to you on behalf of the Global Disability Climate Change Coalition convened by [Disability Rights UK](https://disabilityrightsuk.org). The Coalition includes members from New Zealand, Egypt, Greece, Ireland, and the UK.

Disability Rights UK is the only Disabled Peoples organisation in the UK actively working on [climate-policy](#) and campaigns around disability and climate change. We now have working relationships with not only members of our coalition, but with Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and NPC on the "[Everyones Environment](#)" programme.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) there are currently more than 1 billion Disabled people in the world. This large group of people feel the effects of global warming more deeply and harshly than anyone else, yet currently we have no input into discussions on the topic.

The UK Government has acknowledged that to date, very little work has been done to explore issues on resilience-building for people with disabilities, in the context of longer-term climatic and environmental change.

**The UN has also recognised that people with disabilities are at increased risk of the adverse impacts of climate change – including threats to health, food security, water, sanitation, and livelihood.**

**Despite our Coalition having written to successive COP events, asking that Disabled people be actively engaged in discussions, our concerns remain unaddressed. The subject has been continuously pushed to the sidelines, when it should be a central part of the agenda.**

We note on the website for this year's event that it states:

"The COP29 Presidency is listening to and engaging with a broad range of international stakeholders. It is working to **ensure everyone's voices are heard** and perspectives are considered and included so that we deliver **inclusive outcomes based on shared solutions**. We are optimistic that together we can make real progress."

As representatives of the Disabled community, we respectfully urge you to reach out to us, to finally ensure Disabled voices are heard and our perspectives considered, so the community is finally allowed to input to "deliver inclusive outcomes based on shared solutions." We ask that you not only include a specific session on Disabled people at COP29 but that every session addresses the implications for people with disabilities.

We must emphasise that Disabled people are a mix of varying disabilities, genders, cultures, ages, and faiths. We urge you to break the stereotypes by ensuring Disabled voices are heard through prominent discussions on how climate change affects everyone, including us.



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As a disability rights organisation and disability climate coalition, we would be pleased to work with you and other disability representatives to shape a specific main stage session on the COP29 agenda and beyond, that focuses on the impact of climate change on Disabled people and disability inclusive solutions. We propose this session be led by Disabled people themselves.

**The urgency for such dialogue and collaboration grows and the evidence for our argument increases as the clock ticks, for instance:**

- Higher temperatures are more likely to affect people with disabilities or pre-existing conditions that limit the body's ability to stay cool. Medications that Disabled people rely on to manage their conditions can also interact negatively with heat. Areas that experience severe cool temperatures can also have high negative impacts.
- Disabled people are frequently unable to leave their homes and reach safety in the event of evacuation due to environmental catastrophes, leading to the loss of many lives. **Disabled people are twice as likely as any other group to die in disasters.**
- **Pandemics strike Disabled individuals harder than anyone else** due to long term health conditions including weakened immune systems, and unequal access to health care. Covid-19 is believed to be the first of many Pandemics which will sweep across the Globe as the climate changes.
- Environmental illnesses of many kinds are on the rise. **Environmental Pollution is a major cause of ill health: creating childhood disability**, impairing children's health, diminishing their capacity to learn, and reducing their life chances.

**Through lack of action, the lives of millions of Disabled children worldwide are being damaged by growing environmental pollution.**

It is vital that the voices of Disabled people are heard, and that our ideas, solutions and representations are included and given weight. As a Disabled people's organisation, working with global Disability climate activists and environmental organisations, we ask you to engage with us on all aspects of climate change, beginning with Cop 29 and onwards, to allow us a seat at the main table.

We, Disabled people, are the experts on our own lives, we must speak for ourselves and must be included in all climate change discussions. We find ourselves, again and again pushed to the sidelines when our voices and ideas can help shape policy that can be designed for everyone of all abilities.



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I look forward to your early response and to future discussions.

Let's work together, to include every voice.

***"It might be easier to trust that the response for the next climate-induced disaster will consider the needs of people who use sign language, have unpaid carers, or require controlled medications, if people with a range of disabilities were prominently represented throughout the planning."*** Poppy Ellis Logan

Many thanks

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "KMA", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kamran Mallick *CEO Disability Rights UK*  
Dan White *Policy and Campaigns officer Disability Rights UK*