

**Thematic Session
Disability**

**Implications of International Human Rights
Law and International Disaster Law
for Persons with Disabilities
in the Era of Climate Change**

**Michal Balcerzak
[Vice-Chairperson, UN Committee on the Elimination
of Racial Discrimination]**

The presentation will aim at establishing whether the rights of persons with disabilities are adequately reflected in the current normative framework related with the effects of climate change. While seen through the lens of the OHCHR report (“Analytical study on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of climate change”), the problem will be tackled in a larger perspective of international disaster law and its implications. The links between climate change and the occurrence of disasters are evident, and so are the particular dangers that disasters produce for human rights, in particular for vulnerable groups. The speaker will focus on developments in this regard, e.g. the draft Articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters elaborated by the UN International Law Commission in 2016.

Although the concept of “vulnerability” is not always well received or accepted in the discourse on human rights, the presentation will attempt to explain the contexts that this notion is applied in the discussion on climate change and international disaster law. Notwithstanding the use of the term “vulnerability”, the fundamental question remains whether the special needs and rights of persons with disabilities are sufficiently taken into account in the era of climate change. The crucial aspect of the problem is to juxtapose the existing normative framework with the potential risks faced by persons with disabilities due to environmental and other hazards caused by the changing climate.