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TO:

Secretary General

Council of Europe

Avenue de l'Europe

F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France

**CC**

Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe

Directorate of Human Dignity and Equality

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**Subject : Decision on the suspension of the CAHDPH and future of Disability Action Plan**

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Dear Secretary General,

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an independent organisation defending the rights of **80 million persons with disabilities in Europe**.

With this letter we would like to express our **deepest concern and disappointment** regarding the unexpected decision of the Committee of Ministers to suspend the work of the Ad-Hoc Committee of experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and all its activities and meetings, including those related to the Disability Strategy for 2017-2023. Furthermore, we are very concerned that the implementation of the Disability Strategy 2017-2023 will not be satisfactory without clear mechanisms and resources allocated for its implementation and monitoring.

Persons with disabilities are still one of the most marginalised groups in society. The creation of the CAHDPH was a very welcome development to ensure that the Council of Europe not only complies with, but also implements the rights of persons with

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disabilities enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Forty-six out of the forty-seven Member States of the Council of Europe having now ratified the CRPD, the suspension of the CAHDPH sends a very negative message to the international community. Moreover, it goes against the CRPD Committee's views that budgetary cuts should not disproportionately affect the rights of persons with disabilities and that States Parties should prevent further adverse and retrogressive effect of austerity measures.

Although it has been stated that disability will be mainstreamed across the Council through relevant intergovernmental work and co-operation activities, there are worrying signals such as the current reading of the draft Additional Protocol to the Oviedo Convention, which shows the opposite, as it deeply violates the basic principles set by the CRPD and its Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**In these circumstances, the European Disability Forum, the umbrella organisation representing the organisations of persons with disabilities in the majority of the Council of Europe Member States, invites you to consider the negative impact of the suspension of the CAHDPH and take all necessary measures to ensure that all future decisions taken by the Council of Europe, including by the Committee of Ministers, comply with the rights of persons with disabilities.**

We would like to assure you about our strong commitment to work with you constructively, in line with article 4.3 of the UN CRPD, in order to secure the full implementation of the CRPD and mainstreaming of the rights of persons with disabilities in all activities and actions of the Council of Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Yannis Vardakastanis

President

European Disability Forum

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