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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Iran Autism Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2021]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The Right of Individuals with Autism has been Violated through UCMs and Increasing Economic Pressures

Iranian society is struggling with multiple economic and financial problems these days. The escalation of unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States of America, alongside other domestic economic policies, which have increased through the pandemic, has posed many challenges.

Due to constant needs and special conditions, the vulnerable groups have been affected more by damaged caused by sanctions and political economy decisions.

In this statement, we point out some challenges that Individuals with autism and their families face and welcome the attention of the Expert Mechanism on the right to development to the harmful effects of UCMs on human rights, especially the right to health.

The disabled community of the Islamic Republic of Iran and people with special needs, including autism, face difficult situations. These persons should constantly have access to medical and rehabilitative services. Timely diagnosis and starting medication from childhood improve their behavioral, motor, and verbal abilities. Many individuals have been diagnosed, but due to financial problems, their parents and caregivers are not able to afford the cost of medical interventions and have lost the golden age of autism treatments. Most families and caregivers have started the therapeutic process; however, they have not continued because of mentioned issues. These conditions lead to exacerbating nervous behaviors in these persons, which makes previous treatments ineffective. Over the past year, the cost of receiving autism rehabilitation services in Iran has at least doubled. The drugs needed by these people are either not available due to import restrictions or are hard to access or accessible with multiplier price.

Empowering these persons to enter society independently is vital for families and the autism community. These conditions have affected their standards of social life. Many people with autism in Iran are adults. Despite the family's attention to the treatment process at different ages and receiving timely and appropriate treatment and rehabilitation services, it is time to acquire job skills and enter society independently. But parents and caregivers cannot afford the high cost of vocational classes and workshops. There is virtually no room for many people with autism in the community and workplace.

Those mentioned above have faced autism individuals and their families with physical and mental crises.

We all acknowledge:

Health and access to adequate health care are recognized as fundamental human rights in various treaties. Article 12 of the "International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights" (ICESCR) (1966) recognizes the right of everyone enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Articles 25 and 26 (1) of the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (2006) also mention the importance of rehabilitation.

However, people with disabilities and autism in Iran have been deprived of many of their fundamental rights due to current economic conditions, and their right to health has been violated.

Beyond the right to health, article 8 (2) (iii) of the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" considers the promotion of skills, competencies, and abilities of persons with disabilities and their participation in the workplace and labor market. Also, article 9 (1) of the convention emphasizes enabling persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. This notable point was reaffirmed on "World Autism Awareness Day" (2021). UN Secretary-General, António Guterres raised diversity at the workplaces as an essential issue and named this day: "Inclusion at the Workplace". However, despite all the efforts of non-governmental organizations in Iran to raise awareness of autism and familiarize business owners with the capabilities of these persons, the current economic situation in Iran has disrupted this process.

In line with different treaties, it has been announced and agreed that everyone, without any discrimination, should enjoy all the rights and freedoms outlined in these documents. Thus,

equality and diversity, regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and individuals' physical and mental condition, have already been emphasized as a principle and foundation by the international community. But the rights of people with autism, including the right to health and the right to have a standard life condition, have been violated indirectly by current economic conditions resulting from unilateral sanctions against Iran and inappropriate policies.

Regarding the mentioned issues, the "Iran Autism Association" calls for the international community's attention, including governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, to pay particular attention to the influence of political and economic decisions on the public, including the disabled and individuals with autism. Sanctions are the fact that Iranian society faces. What is clear is that people with disabilities and people with autism are affected more by the current situation. A significant issue that needs to be noticed is how to settle sanctions so that ordinary persons, including the disabled and vulnerable, are not affected.

Recognizing the importance of international cooperation to improve the living conditions of people with disabilities in all countries, especially in developing countries, that emphasized in the "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (article 32), the "Iran Autism Association" call on the Expert Mechanism to offer the Human Rights Council with recommendations on how actors in the international community, including governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations, private companies, and even individuals can cooperate in reducing the impact of global political and economic decisions on vulnerable groups in all countries, including the disabled and autism community in Iran.

"Iran Autism Association" condemns the negative impact of unilateral sanctions on human rights, especially the right to health for all people, including those who have autism, and calls on the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health to study the effect of UCMs on people's quality of life including access to medical treatments and the need for training and living independent in Iran and report the findings to the Human Rights Council.
