

March 31th, 2020

Mr. LUIS ALMAGRO  
SECRETARY GENERAL  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
Washington D.C.

**SUBJECT:** Urgent action required to eliminate all forms of negative discrimination against blind and low vision persons in the Latin American Region - Covid 19

Dear Mr. Almagro,

The Latin American Blind Union - ULAC (by its initials in Spanish), represents blind and low vision people and their organizations, and has consultative status with the OAS.

Therefore we urge your immediate intervention to strongly recommend member states to include blind and low vision people in the process of taking their decisions and actions in face of the pandemic that threatens the American continent.

Blind and low vision people are aware of the risk we run as a species. We fully agree with the instructions given by WHO and PAHO to restrain the Covid 19 pandemic and also agree with confinement and social distancing but we categorically reject the acts of discrimination of our States.

We know that the over-70s is the high-risk population and we agree with all the protection measures in their favor, but our group today faces more exclusion and marginalization than ever before.

Mandatory confinement leads us to isolation but most of us do not have the technological resources required to channel every aid, claim and demand of services through the digital infrastructure settled by governments.

The authorities of the states of our region have specified measures and have established guarantees for vulnerable populations, forgetting that we, blind and low vision people, need clear actions from the organizations responsible for facing and overcoming the humanitarian and health crisis created by COVID-19 pandemia.

Because of that, we request you and the OAS to take action to urge governments to provide blind and low vision people with all the information in accessible formats and means, so that we are provided with the technologies and connectivity that will allow us to access information, financial and food aid, medical care, quality education, possibility of working from home and entertainment. We also urge that the aid that the States promise to informal workers, women, elderly persons, boys, girls and young people, also reach blind and low vision people of these same groups.

Blind and low vision women are among the categories established by UN Women. They are single mothers, caregivers, responsible in many cases for children and the elderly.

In addition, blind and low vision youth are also in charge of older adults and people with disabilities.

However, public policies, plans and programs that are being adopted have no differential focus, therefore, they neither identify nor address the particular condition of the people who join at the same time. disability, gender, age range and service provision.

Thus, both the efforts of our groups and the commitments made by the States, contained in the international instruments that guarantee the rights of people with disabilities, as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development Goals, are ignored.

It is inconceivable that after decades of work, we continue to be left behind and outside, that we are prevented from acting and that the only possibility we have is to react by appealing to international organizations against the exclusion, marginalization and discrimination of our governments.

Besides, States must be instructed so that the national organizations that represent us be effectively consulted, and that we participate in the decisions making that affect us in this crisis.

We are sending a copy of this communication to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, because the fundamental rights of blind and low vision people are being threatened and violated due to negative discrimination by governments, which leaves our lives of us who we integrate this group, at high risk.

In solidarity with other groups of people with disabilities and looking forward to your response, we remain,

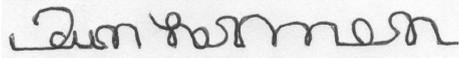
Respectfully yours,



**VOLMIR RAIMONDI- President**



**LUCÍA NIEVES- General Secretary**



**DEAN LERMEN- Secretary of Human Rights**