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The Permanent Mission of Egypt  
to the United Nations  
New York

بعثة مصر الدائمة  
لدى الأمم المتحدة  
نيويورك

United Nations General Assembly Sixth  
Committee (75<sup>th</sup> Session)

اللجنة السادسة للجمعية العامة للأمم المتحدة  
(الدورة ٧٥)

Statement on Agenda Item 89:

بيان حول البند ٨٩:

“Protection of persons in the event of  
disasters”

“حماية الأشخاص في حالات الكوارث”

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د. أحمد عبد العزيز

First Secretary (Legal Advisor)

سكرتير أول (مستشار قانوني)

11 November 2020

١١ نوفمبر ٢٠٢٠

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Madam Chair,

Egypt would like to thank the Secretary General for his report included in document number A/75/214.

Undoubtedly, present times have manifested how important it is to enhance international cooperation in preventing and managing all phases of natural and human-made disasters alike, in a manner that prevents their occurrence, mitigates their short and long-term impacts, and protects persons affected by them.

For years, Member States have been cooperating voluntarily in responding the natural disasters worldwide through the provision of humanitarian relief, which has alleviated the suffering of impacted populations and assisted affected states in carrying out their essential duties.

Pandemics, such as the current Covid-19 pandemic, could also qualify as disasters as per Article 3(a) of the draft articles of the International Law Commission under discussion. This article defines disasters as “a calamitous event or series of events resulting in widespread loss of life, great human suffering and distress, mass displacement, or large-scale material or environmental damage, thereby seriously disrupting the functioning of society”. Pandemics also have the effect of exacerbating the impacts of other disasters.

Madam Chair,

Egypt believes that the development of an international legal framework to facilitate the adequate and effective response to disasters, and reduce the risk thereof, is indeed a positive step towards the codification and development of international law. Such framework shall take into consideration that the main responsibility to

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respond to disasters rests with the affected state, and that any external assistance in this regard shall be presented upon request or acquiesce, while fully upholding the principle of sovereignty of states.

Madam Chair,

On substance, my delegation is of the view that more emphasis ought to be given to man-made disasters, referred to in the preambular paragraphs of the draft articles, particularly in the context of risk reduction, as reflected in Article 9 of the draft articles. As has been manifested most recently, and throughout history, man-made disasters can have more dire and severe impacts than natural disasters. It is incumbent upon all Member States to ensure that they take all appropriate measures to anticipate, prevent, and mitigate man-made disasters, including transboundary impacts arising from megaprojects. This inevitably includes close collaboration and joint, rather than unilateral, actions to govern megaprojects starting from the planning phase, through operation, and all the way to devising preventive measures to avoid and mitigate the consequences of any shortcomings.

Madam Chair,

To conclude, we have taken note of the diverse views expressed on the matter during the 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Assembly, and as reported in the Secretary General's report, and appreciate the need to allow for more consultations between Member States to build the necessary consensus before deciding the upcoming steps on the draft articles at hand.

Thank you Madam Chair.