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Statement

by

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Minister Counsellor**

**before the Sixth Committee
of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

Agenda Item 89:

Protection of persons in the event of disasters

New York, 23 October 2020

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Mr. Chair,

The protection of persons in the event of disasters is an extremely important issue in our view. Thailand believes that a well-defined legal framework for timely and effective provision of relief and rehabilitation is necessary in order to provide a basis for cooperation among States.

In this context, Thailand wishes to place on record our sincere appreciation to the ILC for preparing the draft articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters. These draft articles are indeed timely and provide a good basis for us to continue the discussions on the rights and responsibilities of States and persons during disasters, as well as to explore further actions that could be taken.

Mr. Chair,

In light of the draft articles before us, we fully support the overall effort to achieve a balance between the core principles of national sovereignty and non-intervention of the affected States, as well as the need to strengthen cooperation among States concerning the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

My intervention will focus on three substantive issues.

First, with regard to the definition of “disaster” under draft article 3, we note that the current definition seems to focus on the results or effects of the event or series of events that took place. This may leave room for uncertainty whether an epidemic or a pandemic could also be considered as a disaster under such definition. In light of the current pandemic of COVID-19 which results in widespread loss of life and serious disruption of the functioning of society, it is our view that we should discuss and explore the possibility of whether to include epidemics and pandemics within the definition of “disaster” under this article.

Second, we would like to note that an obligation to notify other States in the event of disaster is currently not included in the draft articles. Thailand is of the view that effective and timely sharing of information and technical resources are extremely necessary and could be useful in an effort to mitigate the widespread impact of the disasters. Therefore, this issue should be included in the draft articles.

Third, we recognise that cooperation among States and the duty to cooperate as stated in draft article 7 could play an important role in this context. We would therefore like to propose that a forum for exchanging best practices among States be established and a drafting of guideline, handbook or standard of procedures in responding to disasters be initiated to provide guidance to States in mitigating the impact of disasters and improving their emergency response measures.

Mr. Chair,

As we move towards achieving a balanced approach in the protection of persons in the event of disasters, it is incumbent upon us to enhance cooperation among States and to actively engage in the creation of the legal framework for this purpose. Accordingly, we support the recommendation made by the ILC to the General Assembly to elaborate a convention on the basis of the draft articles and look forward to actively participating in further discussions on this issue.

Thank you.