



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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STATEMENT

by

MRS. HAWANATU KEBE
FIRST SECRETARY

at the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Agenda Item: 87
“Protection of persons in the event of disasters”

New York, 18th October 2021

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Madam Chair,

The delegation of Sierra Leone aligns this statement with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the African Group.

The delegation of Sierra Leone notes the particular significance of the topic: “**Protection of persons in the event of disasters**”, and the Sixth Committee’s continued consideration of this agenda item, including the recommendation of the International Law Commission (ILC) contained in paragraph 46 of its report (**A/71/10**) on the work of its 68th session – to in particular, elaborate “a convention on the basis of the draft articles”. The General Assembly in resolution **A/71/141** noted “*that the subject of the protection of persons in the event of disasters is of major importance in the relations of States*”. We are therefore mindful that we continue our consideration of the recommendation of the Commission in the middle of a debilitating coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, that has shaken the core of the international community.

We thank the Commission for its continuing contribution to the codification and progressive development of international law, and we continue to pay tribute to the Special Rapporteur, **Mr. Eduardo Valencia-Ospina**, for his outstanding contribution in the preparation of the draft articles, his devoted work, and for the results achieved.

Madam Chair,

Regrettably, our world continues to face increasing number of disasters with concerning intensity and impact on affected populations. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to expose the vulnerabilities of States, and in these moments of crisis the United Nations is expected to lead in its fulfilment of its purposes under its

Charter, in particular “to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character”. However, the inertia in the Sixth Committee on codification may seem to expose the hesitance of the General Assembly to act on recommendations from the ILC on hard law, including the recommendation to elaborate a convention on the basis of the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

The question before the Sixth Committee is fundamentally the taking of a decision on the recommendation of the ILC. While we note the delicate balance struck in the content of the draft articles, the views being expressed demonstrate that States will have to take ownership in the elaboration of a convention. What is needed now is the will to take action on the Commission's recommendation.

On our part, we continue to welcome of the draft articles and see merit in pursuing the recommendation by the ILC. We note with appreciation the emphasis on human rights and human dignity in the content of the draft articles. As has been said in this Committee before, responses to disasters must be embed in the principles of sovereign independence, neutrality, impartiality, and humanity. It is on this basis that Sierra Leone expresses support for the recommendation of the ILC for the elaboration of a convention on the basis of the draft articles, noting that States can further strengthen the text to build broad consensus and universality.

In closing, Madam Chair, Sierra Leone restates its hopes that the Sixth Committee will give meaning to the continued relevance of the progressive development of international law and its codification, especially on topics of major importance to States. As the ILC has not “restrict[ed] itself to traditional topics, but [...has] also consider [a topic] that reflect new developments in international law and pressing concerns of the international community as a whole”, it is now up to

the General Assembly to act, in order to address the lacuna in facilitating international cooperation to protect persons in the event of disasters.

I thank you.