

Statement of Portugal

at the 78th Session of Sixth Committee of the General Assembly

Agenda item 86

Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters

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Mr./Madam Chair,

As this is the first time that Portugal takes the floor in this session of the Sixth Committee, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you the full support of the Portuguese delegation.

Mr./Madam Chair,

We would like to begin by aligning ourselves with the statement made by the European Union, but wish, nevertheless, to make some comments in our national capacity.

The respect for and protection of the human dignity and the human rights of persons affected by disasters is a topic of great relevance for Portugal.

My delegation reiterates its belief that the *Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters* provide an important contribution by the International Law Commission for the progressive development of international law on this subject. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the urgency for establishing a sound and universally inclined international legal framework applicable to disasters in the broad definition contained in Draft Article 3.

Indeed, as nowadays' challenges become ever more transnational and complex, it is likely the world will soon face more and calamitous events, "resulting in widespread loss of life, great human suffering and distress" and "causing serious disruption of the functioning of society".

Mr./Madam Chair,

Portugal maintains that the *Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters* represent a good framework, echoing the human-rights-based approach taken by the Commission in the course of its work.

The Draft Articles strike a good balance between the imperatives of protecting human rights and facilitating international cooperation, while upholding the fundamental principle of State sovereignty and the primary role of the affected State in providing disaster relief assistance.

Mr./Madam Chair,

My delegation has always argued that the result of this work of the Commission should be reflected in an internationally legally binding instrument. We are thus very glad at the chance of analysing this possibility at the Working Group, over the next days.

We look forward to exchanging views with other Member States and observers on specific aspects of the Draft Articles, contributing to reaching a fruitful outcome in the deliberations of the Working Group in the next session of the Sixth Committee.

Thank you, Mr./Madam Chair.