



Statement by the Republic of Cyprus

**By Mr. Theodoulos Pittakis,
Counsellor,
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at the Sixth Committee

**on the Agenda item 86:
"Protection of Persons in the event of disasters"**

United Nations

New York

4 October 2024

Madame Chair,

As this is the first time I am taking the floor during this session, please allow me first to congratulate you, as well as the rest of the Bureau's members on your election and assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

Cyprus aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union and its Member States and would like to make some additional remarks in its national capacity.

Cyprus commends the International Law Commission for its work on the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters and the commentaries thereto.

Disasters are now witnessed in all regions of the world and are accelerating both in frequency and severity. They do not recognize national borders and their consequences are devastating: loss of human life, forced displacement of communities, loss of livelihoods (agriculture, tourism, fishing etc), destruction of cultural heritage and critical infrastructure, biodiversity decline, contamination of fresh water, etc.

All States experience increasing vulnerability, while developing countries are affected the most.

This has been the new reality for the whole region of the Mediterranean too. During recent years, Cyprus has been repeatedly hidden by massive forest fires and prolonged droughts, generated or exacerbated by climate change. We express our sincere gratitude to all States for their solidarity to the Republic of

Cyprus in responding to these catastrophes. We reiterate our own commitment to continue providing humanitarian assistance to other affected states.

Madame Chair,

Cyprus supports the elaboration of an international convention for the protection of persons in the event of disasters. We believe that the draft articles provide a good basis for discussions for a future convention on this topic.

Such convention is essential to strengthen international cooperation for disaster relief, including disaster risk reduction, prevention, preparedness and response. Furthermore, the current international legal framework relating to disasters is fragmented. An international legal instrument of universal character on this topic would be beneficial.

Madame Chair,

Allow me now some general comments on the draft articles:

We welcome the inclusion of a reference to the State sovereignty in the preamble. We believe that the draft articles set an appropriate balance between the principle of State sovereignty, international cooperation and the protection of persons.

We, also, welcome the inclusion, in draft Article 13, paragraph 1, of a reference to the consent of the affected State for the provision of humanitarian assistance. Affected States must have the primary role in the direction, control, coordination and supervision of such assistance. At the same time, the affected

State has to facilitate external assistance that it has consented to while it also has to protect relief personnel, equipment and goods.

Further, the Draft Articles provide clarity as to their relationship with other applicable rules of international law, as well as between the former and international humanitarian law. More precisely, the draft articles are without prejudice to other applicable rules of international law, such as regional or bilateral treaties.

As regards international humanitarian law, the draft articles recognize that in cases of armed conflict governed by international humanitarian law, the international humanitarian law takes precedence as *lex specialis*.

I thank you.