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79TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sixth Committee

Agenda Item 86

“Protection of persons in the event of disasters”

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of Greece

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Mr./Madame Chair,

Greece aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of the European Union and would like to add some remarks in a national capacity.

Greece welcomes the resumption of the debate in the Sixth Committee on the topic of the protection of persons in the event of disasters and wishes to express its appreciation for the fruitful exchange of views, during last year's session of the United Nations General Assembly, within the Working Group of the Sixth Committee mandated to report this year to the Committee on further action with respect to the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters, adopted by the International Law Commission in 2016.

In the last years the frequency and severity of disasters has but intensified, due also to the adverse impacts of climate change that become increasingly evident, such as mega-fires, floods and droughts. Disasters may result in loss of lives, severe material damages, population displacement, environmental degradation and other dire consequences, some of which transcend national borders.

International cooperation has already proven its worth in coping with disasters and their effects and relevant legally binding instruments have already been concluded at the bilateral or regional levels. However, there is no such universal instrument, that would provide a general legal framework for such a cooperation, as well as regulatory guidance for the negotiation of more specific and action-oriented agreements between interested States and international organizations.

The conclusion of such an instrument would fill an important legal gap and, in our view, the International Law Commission's draft articles provide an adequate basis for its elaboration. They constitute a solidly reasoned text and strike a fair balance between State sovereignty on the one hand and the imperatives of promoting international cooperation and protecting human rights of affected persons on the other hand. In this respect, allow us to recall that the draft articles confirm the primary role of the affected State in the provision of disaster relief while, at the same time, encouraging the provision of external assistance by third States, the United Nations or other assisting actors. We also note with appreciation the provisions of the ILC's draft safeguarding the dignity and rights of persons affected by disasters.

It is also noteworthy that the draft articles have a broad scope of application *rationae temporis*, encompassing not only immediate response to disasters but also their prevention and mitigation, thus opting for a holistic approach of the topic.

In view of the above, Greece could consider the option of elaborating a multilateral agreement on the basis of the International law Commission's draft articles. We look forward, in this spirit, to a constructive discussion in the context of the

Working Group, which provides us the opportunity to consider in depth the relevant recommendation of the International Law Commission.

I thank you.