



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations Te Aka Aorere

Sixth Committee – UNGA 80th Session: Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters

New Zealand Statement delivered by Carlie Rua, Legal Adviser

14 October 2025

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair.

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, Canada and my own country, New Zealand.

We welcome the continued deliberations of the Sixth Committee on the “Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters.” This dialogue is timely and reflects our shared commitment to upholding human rights and safeguarding human dignity and resilience in times of crisis.

We commend the International Law Commission for its rigorous work on this important topic and view the ILC’s 2016 draft articles as a useful starting point for considering how States might prepare for and respond to disasters.

CANZ countries recognise the increasing frequency and severity of disasters driven by climate change, which threaten sustainable development and continue to affect countless vulnerable individuals and communities worldwide, including those in the Pacific region. The growing scale and complexity of such events underscore the urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated responses. These disasters often disproportionately impact those who are already at heightened risk, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and remote or resource-limited communities. It is imperative that our collective efforts prioritise the safety, human rights, dignity, and well-being of all affected persons.

We note that effective disaster management can often extend beyond the capacity of individual States. Therefore, strengthening international cooperation and coordination is essential to ensuring timely and effective responses. Robust national systems are vital, but the ability of other States, regional partners, and international organisations to assist through collaboration, sharing of expertise, and mobilisation of resources rapidly is equally important. By fostering strong partnerships and supporting mutual assistance, the

international community can enhance preparedness, facilitate swift response and recovery, and build resilience against future disasters. We acknowledge this Committee's decision to initiate negotiations towards a legally-binding instrument based on the 2016 draft articles. We are interested in the comments of other Member States as they engage in this process.

CANZ countries underscore that States remain under an obligation to respect and protect human rights in accordance with international law. We welcome the continued emphasis on international human rights law in the draft articles and stress the importance of protecting the rights of those most at risk during disasters.

As negotiations towards a potential treaty advance, we see merit in exploring how existing international legal frameworks already provide platforms for effective disaster preparedness, risk reduction, and response. It is important that any new legally-binding instrument is coherent with current international legal regimes, including those addressing climate change, sea-level rise, and international human rights law. This will help avoid duplication and ensure cohesion with existing obligations.

We reiterate that the affected State retains the primary responsibility for disaster prevention and response, including the decision to seek external assistance. As the deliberations on draft articles continue, it is essential to maintain a careful balance between upholding State sovereignty and establishing effective mechanisms for international cooperation and assistance.

CANZ countries acknowledge that divergent views remain on key issues, and we anticipate that these will continue to be the subject of robust debate. We look forward to discussions, including on the scope of obligations related to assistance, relevant definitions, and ensuring that the evolving instrument is practical, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of affected populations.

Finally, Canada, Australia and New Zealand remain committed to constructive engagement on disaster prevention and preparedness and strengthening our collective resilience in the event of disasters.

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair.