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Statement by
Legal Counsellor
Permanent Mission of
Portugal to the United Nations

Mr. Paulo Pinto Machado

Sixth Committee

Agenda item 90

Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters

Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal considers that the "*Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters*" is a topic of great relevance since it deals with the protection of persons who are victims of catastrophes, by giving response to their arising needs in such an event.

We should bear in mind that the inclusion of this topic in the work of the Commission was a proposal by the United Nations, which is, in our view, an significant testimony of the interlink that needs to be fostered between the daily activity of international actors and the work of the Commission.

This topic in particular has gained greater significance nowadays. The occurrence of so many natural disasters and the on-going discussions on climate change and its impact have also a legal dimension that indeed needs to be addressed.

Mr. Chairman,

As we have had the opportunity to state before, we believe this final set of draft articles represents a good framework and provides an important contribution for this subject-matter. Although there are some issues which we would have liked to see further studied and clarified, it is unquestionable that the final work of the Commission addresses is an important contribution to the topic by addressing key aspects as the protection of human rights, State responsibilities and international cooperation in the event of disasters.

The individual has to be at the centre when approaching the topic. We consider that the draft articles duly reflect the rights-based approach taken by the Commission during the course of its work and which Portugal has always

advocated. It is also our understanding that the draft articles strike a balance between two sometimes conflicting values: State sovereignty and the protection of human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Portugal has stated previously that the result of the work of the Commission should be translated into a legally binding instrument, namely into an international convention. We consider that moving towards a convention allows States to claim the work of the Commission as their own and apply it as binding norms, with clear benefit for the protection of the rights of persons affected by disasters.

In this sense, should this set of draft articles gather a general consensus among States, we would support submitting it to a Working Group to further analyse its viability to become an international convention.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.