



**PERMANENT MISSION of the
KINGDOM of TONGA to the UNITED NATIONS**

Statement by:

His Excellency Mr. Viliami Va'inga Tōnē
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations

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Agenda Item 89:

Protection of persons in the event of disasters

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[Check against delivery]

Mr. Chairman,

We thank the bureau and the secretariat for your efforts on the working arrangements for this session. We also thank the Secretary General for his report on “Protection of persons in the event of disasters” in document A/75/214 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/209.

Mr Chairman,

Tonga, in common with most small island states, is extremely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and disaster risks hence we welcome this session under your able leadership, as we look forward to negotiations of favourable terms with the view to reduce the risk of disasters

The geographical, geological and socioeconomic context of Tonga fundamentally determine its vulnerability to climate change and disaster impacts and risks. In accordance with the World Risk Report, 2016, Tonga was ranked, as the World ´s Second Most ‘At Risk’ country, to all disasters (including climate change induced disasters and geological disasters). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that the intensity and frequency of the climate change induced natural disasters will continue to grow, increasing the possibility of countries experiencing large-scale disasters that will require them to turn to the international community for assistance in meeting the needs of the affected populations

While we deliberate on the particulars of this agenda item pertaining to the protection of persons in the event of disasters, Tonga continues to be imperiled by tropical cyclones of unprecedented magnitudes and destructive in nature. Furthermore, we have recently experienced drought, record rates of coastal erosion, overflow and flash flooding. These are further compounded by the rising in sea-level, three times higher, than the global average.

Mr. Chairman,

With the severity of natural disasters in our region and around the globe, it may be appropriate to consider the recommendation of the International Law Commission that a convention be elaborated on the basis of the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters. This will allow us to meet the needs of the affected population through the solidarity and support of the international community while maintaining national sovereignty.

250 EAST 51ST STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10022
TEL: (917) 369- 1025 – FAX (917) 369- 1024
EMAIL : tongaunmission@gmail.com

When a disaster strikes, we should be prepared at all times to respond adequately to address factors that will reduce the negative impact on the lives of the people.

Mr. Chairman,

We anticipate a constructive dialogue to determine the appropriate way forward through sharing best practices with the hope to build our resilience to disaster risks through developing effective instruments that could bring greater accord amongst key players specifically affected States.

I thank you.