

**Statement Delivered by Hanna Betachew Birhanu: on behalf of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: 76 session of the Sixth Committee: Agenda Item 87: Protection of persons in the event of disasters; 18 October 2021, New York**

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**Thank You Madame Chair,**

We thank the Secretary General for his report and the ILC for the work produced;

We also thank the Permanent Missions of Colombia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan and Nigeria for convening the consultation on this agenda item;

Ethiopia aligns itself with the statement made by the Africa Group and I will make a brief statement in my national capacity.

**Madame Chairperson,**

The protection of persons and the responsibility of states, towards the heightened protection needs, during disasters, falls within the purview of human rights, humanitarian laws, and principles of humanitarian assistance. As a result, we consider the exercise on **the rules on protection of persons in the event of disasters** as consolidation of scattered principles. To this end, we do not anticipate the introduction of new concepts and a radical shift from the existing norms of international law on this matter.

Although the draft rules are at an early stage of our consideration and we are yet to make our determination on our subsequent step, we would like to raise the following few points;

**Primarily,** Ethiopia supports the comprehensive scope that gives coverage to both natural and man-made disasters. However, the definition of "disaster" shall be precise and leave no room for expansive definition.

**Second,** the same way, human or man-made disasters increase the need for protection of human rights and fulfilment of basic needs, they also create a heightened risk for public health, order and national security. As a result, disasters call for effective and coordinated governance by the country concerned and adherence to the rules on the ground by humanitarian actors. In this regard, the humanitarian assistance principles outlined in General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114 are of paramount importance. Therefore, in order to serve as a workable ground for future engagements, the draft rules must strictly adhere to the humanitarian principles already in place.

**Third,** we are of the position that international cooperation in the area of humanitarian assistance is a delicate matter. States are the ones with primary responsibility to cater for the needs of their people in the incidence of disasters. Elaboration on how, when and to whom states must plea for international support is a matter that shall be left to them and would need no hard and fast rules.

**Madam Chairperson, my fourth point** is a suggestion, we believe, regional instruments that are already in place may provide inspiration as well as lesson for the international rule we are attempting to prepare. The African Union convention for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa (also known as Kampala Convention) stands out as the only binding legal instrument on the field. The Convention that is signed by forty-one and ratified by thirty-two states responded to the intricate legal and political problems in the protection of persons affected by disasters. The Convention establishes a legal framework for prevention and mitigation of the human toll of man-made and natural disasters. It certainly is worth consideration, for the benefit of the global drive towards a normative framework on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

**Madam Chairperson,**

We believe that member states' perspectives, especially the perspectives of states that are prone to disasters and rely on international cooperation to contain the ramifications must be well considered.

More work is needed to elaborate and build common understanding to produce a Convention on the matter. Ethiopia stands ready to work with all member states on this initiative.

**Thank You**