



*The Permanent Mission of Portugal  
to the United Nations*

## **Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters (Agenda item 87)**

Madam Chair,

The topic on the respect for and protection of the human dignity and the human rights of persons affected by disasters is of great relevance for my delegation.

We reiterate our thanks to the Secretary General for his 2020 report on this topic and we commend the States who have submitted their comments for this report, by presenting their views on any future action regarding the *Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters*.

Madam Chair,

As previously stated before this Committee, Portugal believes that the *Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters* provide an important contribution by the International Law Commission for the progressive development of international law on this subject.

Those Draft Articles represent a good framework, reflecting the human-rights-based approach taken by the Commission in the course of its work. The Draft Articles achieve a good balance between, on the one hand, the imperatives of protecting human rights and facilitating international cooperation and, on the other, the importance of upholding the fundamental principle of State sovereignty and the primary role of the affected State in providing disaster relief assistance.



*The Permanent Mission of Portugal  
to the United Nations*

For these reasons, Portugal always defended that the result of this work of the Commission should be translated into an internationally legally binding instrument.

Recognizing, however, that different views on this matter still remain, we support a structured, inclusive and comprehensive discussion on this topic, such as in the context of an Ad Hoc Committee, with a view to promoting further exchanges on the subject, including on the possibility of negotiating a future international convention on the basis of the Draft Articles.

Madam Chair,

This debate in the Sixth Committee takes place while the world still struggles to recover from the major and disruptive impacts of a global pandemic. In our view, this further illustrates the relevance of having a convention on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

Indeed, the broad definition of "disaster" contained in Draft Article 3 emphasises that, rather than its characterisation, it is the consequences of an event that renders it a disaster.

Portugal understands that the COVID-19 pandemic could fit this definition, as "a calamitous event", "resulting in widespread loss of life, great human suffering and distress" and "causing serious disruption of the functioning of society".



*The Permanent Mission of Portugal  
to the United Nations*

As such, we believe that it is timely to reflect on elements for an effective response to the needs of persons affected by this pandemic, including on the basis of the Draft Articles. Among those elements, which could be part of a future convention, could be the importance of ensuring cooperation amongst States, and of States with other relevant actors – such as the United Nations and the components of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as mentioned in Draft Article 7.

I thank you, Madam Chair.