



STATEMENT

BY

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**ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 86: THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS IN THE EVENT OF
DISASTERS, IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS LEGAL
COMMITTEE (SIXTH COMMITTEE)**

WEDNESDAY, 4th OCTOBER 2023

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

As this is the first time I take the floor, allow me to express congratulations to you, and your newly elected Bureau for this 78th Session of the UNGA. Rest assured of Jamaica's and CARICOM's continued support as you seek to carry out your duties for this session.

Mr. Chairman,

Less than two weeks ago, our leaders gathered here in these very walls to discuss the future of the global community, and to reaffirm the role of multilateralism in advancing our sustainable development objectives. It is heartening to know, that despite the varied challenges and contending dynamics within the international community, we remain united in the cause for our survival.

As we work to secure the planet for future generations, the question of the protection of persons in the event of disasters becomes even more crucial. Within the context of the ongoing discussions, the global push for the elaboration of a convention on the basis of these draft articles is justified by the prevalence of naturally occurring disasters. These disasters, once experienced, upend lives and livelihoods, given the devastating effects they have on the socio-economic framework of the countries affected. For this reason, CARICOM commends the International Law Commission (ILC) for the work undertaken to develop the Draft Articles for the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters.

We further note that prior to the development of the Draft Articles, this area of law had been encumbered by a plethora of international instruments, which have sought to address specific issues but in a fragmented way. As such, we see the need to develop a well-crafted and clearly articulated flagship instrument, and believe that these articles provide a solid basis upon which to elaborate this convention.

Mr. Chairman,

From the perspective of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the quest for sustained development has been greatly stalled by the recurrence of naturally occurring phenomena. For CARICOM, the vulnerability of our economies to these shocks is a direct result of our small population size, geographic location, limited resources and undiversified economies. We are particularly vulnerable to earthquakes, and are susceptible to floods and hurricanes.

For this reason, CARICOM welcomes a legally binding instrument as it lends itself to very practical advantages. One such would be the creation of an established framework to provide support to the global community. This becomes necessary in the event of calamitous events resulting in the widespread loss of life, great human suffering and distress, mass displacement, or large-scale material or environmental damage.

Further, the elaboration of the Draft Articles into a Convention would, *inter alia*, confirm the centrality of the respect for the human dignity of persons affected by disasters, particularly vulnerable persons.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM believes that provisions for Risk Management should be included in the future Convention. This is consistent with the provisions of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015 – 2030), which support the inclusion of disaster risk policies and strategies for any such mechanism being established.

It is equally imperative that any comprehensive legal approach to international disasters reflects the importance of respecting and protecting the inherent dignity and human rights of persons affected by disasters. We note with appreciation the inclusion of critical safeguards in the draft articles which attempt to strike a balance between the provision of humanitarian assistance and the respect for state sovereignty.

CARICOM is committed to working with its regional partners and the wider international community to further develop and implement measures aimed at mitigating the risk and impact of disasters and facilitating innovative, effective and adequate responses in the wake of such events.

Mr. Chairman, Colleagues,

As we move into the next few days of targeted discussions on this crucial issue within the context of the Working Group, CARICOM urges all stakeholders to engage constructively on the issues. We have a duty as citizens of this global community, to prepare a world in which all are protected in the event of disasters.

I thank you.