



Sixth Committee

“Protection of persons in the event of disasters”

**Statement by Wieteke Theeuwen
Legal Adviser of the Permanent Mission the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations**

NEW YORK, 4 October 2023

Madam/Mr. Chair,

The Netherlands welcomes the resumed discussion within this Committee on the protection of persons in the event of disasters, which indeed is a very important and topical subject.

We recognize that there is a global need for better protection of those suffering from disasters and for better coordination in disaster responses. In this regard, the Netherlands welcomed the adoption of the draft articles of the ILC on this subject. These articles have contributed to clarifying the different roles, responsibilities and duties of the main actors involved in disaster relief. In our view, the draft articles in their current state are useful as non-binding guidelines that may assist in a better protection of persons affected by disasters, in a very practical way.

The draft articles strike a balance between assistance offered in response to acute needs of victims and the responsibilities of the affected State. Thus, aid that is not in conformity with accepted principles on humanitarian assistance may be refused, but consent to external assistance shall not be withheld arbitrarily.

The articles also underscore the importance of removing obstacles in national law that would hamper a speedy provision of assistance in disasters which exceed the national capacity.

Madam/Mr. Chair,

Turning now to possible next steps in relation to the draft articles.

While acknowledging that there is no coherent international legal framework on this topic, the Netherlands has previously expressed hesitation in relation to working towards a legally binding instrument on the basis of these articles, as some of the articles go beyond existing international law and the scope is rather broad. Having said that, the Netherlands will approach the working group with an open mind and willingness to engage constructively in exploring next steps [that would enhance the urgently needed protection of persons in the event of disasters].

Thank you, Madam/Mr. Chair