



PERMANENT MISSION OF NIGERIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY

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**PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NIGERIA TO THE
UNITED NATIONS**

ON

**“PROTECTION OF PERSONS IN THE EVENT OF
DISASTERS” AGENDA ITEM 86**

4TH OCTOBER 2023

Mr. Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor to speak on this very important item. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Uganda on behalf of the African Group and the Core Group on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disaster.

2. We commend the International Law Commission for its work to develop the draft document on the agenda item. The recommendation for the ILC draft articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters to be elaborated in a convention is timely. The recent in disasters leading to deaths of thousands in Morocco, Libya and Maui, Hawaii are reminders of the importance of such a convention.

3. We commiserate with families who suffered losses and our heartfelt prayers to those in disaster situations at this moment as many places across the globe have been affected by one or more of: floodings, landslides and mudslides, wildfires and hurricanes. These disasters have brought about an increase in poverty, insecurity, and health challenges, especially in the less developed regions. Not to forget, the flood experience in New York City a few days ago with many of us cut up at home, train stations, in our Missions, shopping malls, with many homes flooded. In this context we welcome the decision of the General Assembly in Resolution 76/119 to engage more in substantive discussion with a Working Group on the elaboration of a convention for the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters that was adopted in 2016.

Mr. Chair,

4. Disasters, whether natural or man-made, remain a major challenge to achieving global sustainability. Climate change has already modified the frequency and intensity of many weather-related hazards. It has also increased the vulnerability, and eroding the resilience, of exposed populations that depend on arable land, access to water, and stable rainfall. There is the need to advance policies and practices to reduce the risk of disasters; one way to reduce such risks is to put in place laws and to ensure effective integration of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) policies in disaster management processes. The establishment of concrete structures and measures guided by an international legally binding instrument is key to assisting persons and communities affected by disasters. We agree with the United Nations Office for Disasters Risk Reduction (UNDRR) that disaster risk must urgently be reduced through prevention, mitigation, and adaptation. My delegation supports the declaration on the mid-term review of the Sendai Framework which calls on States to take appropriate action including through legislation and regulation to prevent and manage disasters.

5. The impact of disasters in Africa, further exacerbated by climate change, is severe with massive deaths, loss of homes, livelihoods, and displacement, landslides which also impact food insecurity. Prevention and early warning strategies in the region on disasters is key. The African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa of 2009, known as the Kampala Convention, which is the first of its type. This reflects Africa's commitment to the protection of persons during disasters. Although, it addresses mainly IDPs, Nigeria believes that this is a

positive step forward in having a comprehensive discussion on this agenda item.

Mr. Chair,

6. Nigeria has also faced disasters, the most recurring being floods, destructive storms, desertification and drought. Climate disasters are happening at frightening rate in Nigeria. In 2021, over 2.3 million people were affected by floods. In 2022 alone, flooding killed at least 662 people, injured 3, 174 with about 2.5 million displaced and 200,000 houses destroyed. Many small-scale disasters occur in the country each year due to flooding and landslides, but which are not widely reported Yet, their impact is damaging as large disasters, causing deaths, injuries, and loss of livelihoods. To address these challenges, Nigeria established the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in 1999 to manage disasters and coordinate efforts and resources towards efficient and effective disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and response. The Act vested the authority of managing disasters through enabling law and to formulate policy, co-ordinate plans and programmes for efficient and effective response to disasters at national level as well as monitor the state of preparedness.

7. While the Agency is saddled with the coordination of response agencies during emergency situations in the country, it nevertheless co-operates and collaborates with relevant institutions in ensuring that the public is well educated and protected from disasters. NEMA provided the Nigerian Hydrological Services Agency (NIHSA) with three automated Weather Observation Stations to strengthen

collaboration in disaster risk identification, analysis, and mitigation. The stations are also useful for training students in related fields.

8. To further drive and promote the campaign on disaster risk reduction, the National Orientation Agency (NOA) launched a number of awareness campaigns aimed at changing the attitude of Nigerians positively. It signed memoranda of understanding with other agencies like the Ecological Fund Office, National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), (NEMA) and others to promote these campaigns. Some of the campaigns include “Avoid Dirt, Be Clean”, Campaign on destruction of used and empty cans, National Symbols Awareness campaign, campaign for sustainable dialogue, ‘Do The Right Thing’ Transform Nigeria campaign, among others. The agency had also hosted a maiden meeting of the Inter – Agency Strategy session on border communities’ sensitization on security awareness.

9. In line with Global Standards on Disaster risk reduction, building resilience in communities is an essential strategy in tackling floods and other disasters. To prevent deathly disasters, investment in infrastructure that can withstand natural disasters is important so is education on preparedness on how to evacuate safely, how to stockpile emergency supplies, and how to communicate with each other during disasters.

10. Emergencies have a significant impact on affected persons, communities, and their neighbours. Given this, a well-coordinated response is important, especially for recovery that necessitates international cooperation. Disaster management laws must be

effective and comprehensive to enable this to be achieved. We support the African Group to condemn unequivocally the use of Unilateral Coercive Measures (UCM) in the event of disasters, this creates hurdles, sufferings, in protecting affected citizens during natural disasters and emergencies. It also infringes on fundamental rights, which has also been reiterated by the Human Right Council Resolution A/HRC/52/L.18 on the negative impact of UCM on the enjoyment of human rights among many others.

Mr. Chair,

11. Giving special attention to the vulnerable and integrating gender perspective in managing disasters will promote inclusivity that could help contribute to the achievement of various Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Chair,

12. The Covid 19 pandemic further underscored the need to pursue multilateral approaches in addressing global disasters. To this end, there is an urgent need to establish a common set of criteria for disasters management comprising of different entities with focused responsibilities, varied resources and capabilities for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, continuity, and recovery. We commend the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on Humanitarian International assistance, while urging for more clarity on supplies of emergency relief materials during complex emergencies and natural disasters. In addition, we thank all who donate during such emergencies, and

urge that such humanitarian assistance or aid should not be politicized.

Mr. Chair,

13. Even with divergence in views regarding this issue, my delegation observes, with satisfaction, that there has been a growing awareness and greater attention from Member States, International Organisations and Donors for the need for international law to strengthen efforts at prevention, response, and recovery.

14. Protection of people in disaster situations is not limited to securing the survival and physical security of those affected, but also encompasses all relevant guarantees including civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights within international law.

15. In conclusion, Mr. Chair, my delegation will continue to support the elaboration of a convention based on the draft articles which will serve as a base framework for cooperation in the face of disasters, be it natural or others.

I thank you.