



Statement

on behalf of the Republic of South Africa

by

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under Agenda Item 86**

“Protection of persons in the event of disasters”

New York

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Chair,

Allow me to thank you for affording us the floor and to express our gratitude to the International Law Commission for their work in preparing the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

My delegation would also like to express its thanks to those States that have provided comments on the draft articles, which allow for a broader understanding of the various perspectives of countries and facilitate a more comprehensive discussion.

Chair,

South Africa enacted legislation in 2002, which provides for disaster management in an integrated and coordinated manner and addresses prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation.

Notwithstanding, just last week, South Africa experienced severe flooding, which again resulted in extensive damage and loss of life. South Africa's experience is not unique.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has noted that extreme weather and climate is resulting in increased heatwaves, droughts, tropical cyclones and precipitation. Africa is amongst the geographical areas most affected by climate change and the consequential disasters. In the last year, the world has witnessed severe disasters that have resulted in large-scale destruction, displacement and loss of life.

Disasters are consistently becoming more frequent, more complex and have broader impacts. There is thus also a growing need for increased cooperation amongst States.

Chair,

Whilst many disasters are natural, the draft articles are not restricted to addressing the protection of persons only in the context of natural disasters, but extend to man-made disasters.

As indicated in the commentary to the draft articles, the inclusion of human-made disasters is a distinctive characteristic of the draft articles. This is to be welcomed as the interaction between natural and human factors in the cause and amplification of disasters should not be overlooked.

Chair,

It is disconcerting that disasters are increasing and the responsibility that States have in responding appropriately to such disasters is becoming ever more manifest.

South Africa unequivocally supports of the draft articles forming the basis of a Convention. The establishment of a Working Group to carryout work on this matter is a great step to the commitment states have made in ensuring that human life is spared during disasters. That being said, South Africa is concerned of the slow progress that is being made in other areas and calls upon states to work speedily in ensuring that the Convention becomes a reality.

As such, a discussion regarding the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters is most opportune and South Africa welcomes further discussions in the working group.

I thank you.