



**PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement by Ms. Jeanett Vea, Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Tonga to  
the United Nations.**

**Delivered at the 6<sup>th</sup> Committee – 78<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General  
Assembly**

**Agenda Item 87: Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters**

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**Thank you, Mr. Chairman,**

Our delegation appreciates the opportunity for us to take the floor given the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters is a topic of paramount importance for us in Tonga, having lived under the existential threat of climate change due to increased intensity and severity of hurricanes, day in, day out; rapid rise in sea-level due to melting sea ice; and recently more frequent earthquakes recorded, due to increased volcanic activities in Tonga and surrounding areas.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Since this is Tonga's first time to address the Sixth Committee in this Session, we express our congratulations to Your Excellency and the Bureau on your election and assure you of our delegation's full support. We convey our heartfelt condolences to the governments and peoples of Morocco and Libya, especially the families of the victims, for the tragic loss of lives in the recent natural disasters that occurred in their respective countries.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Tonga was once ranked the second most at risk in the world to natural disasters, and rightly so, as Scientists around the world were left oblivious to an unprecedented disaster occurred on the 15 January 2022, when an underwater volcano of Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha'apai erupted with an "off the scale" magnitude in Tonga, which triggered a tsunami of an unprecedented height, in fact almost as high as the Statue of Liberty. According to Scientists who studied the incident - plumes, ash and water entered the mesosphere, the layer of atmosphere above the stratosphere.

Being situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire which is known for volcanic eruptions and regular earthquakes while noting that predicting and mitigating volcanic eruptions is difficult under any circumstance, Tonga is faced with a very challenging situation.

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The ensuing tsunami devastated our economy. Several islands were completely or severely destroyed. People were displaced and then evacuated to neighboring islands. The volcanic eruption and tsunami cut access to basics for people and cut a precious lifeline for an island nation, our communications. The widespread economic and social damage and sadly loss of lives, is estimated by the World Bank at 36.4% of Tonga's GDP.

In our hour of need, we recognize with our deepest appreciation the response from Member States and their peoples. We recognize the support of the philanthropic institutions, the United Nations System and other Intergovernmental Organizations, Development Partners, the private sector, Non- Government Organizations, and Individuals. We are deeply grateful in this regard and therefore stress again the importance of this topic and the need to carefully deliberate on the draft placed before us by the International Law Commission (ILC).

**Mr. Chairman,**

We commend the work of the ILC in producing the Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters. This is an important contribution to the work of this Committee, which we ought to carefully consider by ensuring that the most desirable outcomes are achieved with the view to providing those in need in the Event of Disasters with timely and appropriate assistance. I note from discussions made thus far, that we still need further deliberations on elements that require deeper and realistic considerations. As such, our delegation looks forward to engaging collaboratively in this regard.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Tonga participated in the Midterm Review of the Sendai Framework earlier this year. Again, and as has already been reiterated by colleagues from the Pacific in many platforms, our countries need more progress and remain at the forefront of battling climate-related hazards. Timely access to finance prevents SIDS from making the progress we hope for and must have.

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Tonga, in this regard, calls for action to review the largely uncoordinated funding mechanisms, to prioritize short-term post-disaster financing needs and to address long-term risk reduction. Tonga also calls for investing much more into increasing resilience, especially resilience education. Possessing the tools to demonstrate resilience is a significant part of the preparation.

Long-term risk mitigation and reduction are also intrinsically linked to Early Warning Systems. Tonga affirms its commitment to the implementation of the United Nations Secretary General's Early Warning For All initiative announced at COP27 last year. We reaffirm the resolution that Strengthening Multi-hazard Early Warning Systems is most relevant for implementing the Sendai Framework 2015-2030. Tonga has taken on a lead in this area for our region by implementing a Nationwide Early Warning System throughout Tonga with communications and siren systems.

**Madam Chair,**

We welcome shared best practices, in the hope of building our resilience to disaster risks, and the development of effective instruments to bring greater accord amongst affected States.

**I thank you.**

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