



STATEMENT

BY

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ON BEHALF OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

OF ETHIOPIA

AT

THE 80TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

UNDER AGENDA ITEM 86

“PROTECTION OF PERSONS IN THE EVENT OF DISASTER”

14 OCTOBER 2025

NEW YORK

Mr. Chairperson,

1. Ethiopia aligns itself with the statements delivered by Cameroon on behalf of the African Group, and would like to make the following remarks in our national capacity.
2. Disasters, whether natural or man-made requires every effort to save lives of affected communities and protection of their human rights. Affected States are indeed the primary actors in protecting persons in the events of disaster occurred in their jurisdictions. They have the responsibility to uphold and enforce existing humanitarian laws to ensure the safety and well-being of their population. The protection of persons and the responsibility of states, towards the heightened protection needs, during disasters, fall within the purview of human rights and humanitarian laws, and principles of humanitarian assistance and international cooperation.
3. Therefore, we view the exercise regarding the regulations for protection of persons in the event of disasters as a unifying effort to bring together various principles scattered in different human rights and humanitarian treaties adopted by the UN and regional organizations. In doing so, we do not expect the introduction of new concepts or a complete departure from the current international legal frameworks concerning humanitarian assistance.
4. Natural or man-made disasters increase the need for protection of human rights and fulfillment of the basic needs of affected communities and create a heightened risk for public health, public order and national security. As a result, responses to disasters call for effective and coordinated governance by the affected country and adherence to the rules set by humanitarian actors on the ground.

Mr. Chairperson,

5. The decision to elaborate and conclude a legally binding instrument on the protection of persons in the event of disasters based on the Draft Articles shall be without prejudice to the legal effects of any particular provisions contained therein as provided under UNGA Resolution 79/128.
6. Ethiopia agrees with the inclusive approach that encompasses both natural and man-made disasters. However, it is crucial that the definition of "disaster" shall be clear and specific, without allowing for broad interpretations.
7. We are of the view that international cooperation in the area of humanitarian assistance is a delicate matter. It is the responsibility of States to address the needs of their people during disasters. Elaboration on how, when and to whom States must plea for international support is a matter that shall be left to them. Perspectives of all States on disaster responses and those who rely on international support for relief and humanitarian aid must be well considered in the future instrument.
8. Responses to disaster are not only a humanitarian issue but also a political, public health and security issue for a State where it is occurred. Any future legal instrument including the discussions on the Draft Articles shall take into account the intricate balance between those issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

9. We believe that regional instruments that are already in place may provide inspiration as well as lesson for the international rule we are attempting to negotiate. The African Union convention for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa (also known as the Kampala Convention) stands out as the only binding legal instrument on the field. The Convention establishes a legal framework for prevention and mitigation of the human toll of

man-made and natural disasters. It certainly is worth consideration for the benefit of the global drive towards a normative framework on the protection of persons in the event of disasters.

10. It is also important to elaborate and build common understanding on this agenda item in general and the Draft Articles in particular to elaborate and conclude a legally binding instrument on the protection of persons in the event of disasters. Ethiopia stands ready to work with all member states on this initiative.

I Thank You