



Statement by Mr. Anton Santanen
On behalf of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian
Affairs
Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly

Agenda item 86 on *Protection of persons in the event of disasters*

New York, 16 October 2025

Mr. Chair,

Two years ago, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had the pleasure and privilege of briefing the Working Group on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters.

Since that briefing, disasters have continued to wreak havoc globally, devastating lives, livelihoods and economies, and displacing tens of millions of people.

Disasters continue to disproportionately affect women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, poor and marginalized people and those living in Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries and countries experiencing protracted humanitarian crises.

As highlighted in this year's report of the Secretary-General on *International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development* (A/80/390), which was released on Tuesday, grim records were broken in 2024.

Last year, disasters triggered 45.8 million internal displacements in 163 countries and territories. This is the highest global figure ever recorded and nearly double the annual average of 24 million displacements over the past 15 years.

2024 was the warmest year on record, marking the first calendar year to pass the 1.5°C threshold. Greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat content and sea-level rise all hit new highs in 2024.

Last year, extreme weather events were the primary driver of acute food insecurity for 96.1 million people in 18 countries. This represents a sharp increase over time, compared to 23.5 million people in 8 countries in 2021.

Mr. Chair,

We are witnessing unprecedented disasters, which leave very little, if any, time for recovery. While still emerging from the historic multi-year drought that took place between 2020 and 2023 and the associated risk of famine, Somalia experienced its worst floods in decades. The cumulative impact of such disasters on people's resilience and survival cannot be understated.

Furthermore, we see disasters striking countries in rapid succession. For instance, last year, the Philippines experienced six tropical cyclones over four weeks, while Cuba was struck by Hurricanes Oscar and Rafael and two earthquakes in less than 20 days.

Against such challenges, determined national leadership and investment in disaster risk reduction, community resilience, multi-hazard early warning systems and evacuations, coupled with strong disaster preparedness, response and recovery, are essential.

Mr. Chair,

In the face of growing humanitarian needs and disaster-related challenges, the United Nations and partners have continued to deliver lifesaving humanitarian

assistance and protection to disaster-affected people, reinforcing regional, national and local capacities and responses.

This has been enabled by effective disaster preparedness, early and anticipatory action and rapid response, including the deployment of specialized expertise, such as United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Teams.

In 2025, unprecedented funding cuts have drastically challenged the capacity of the United Nations and humanitarian partners to deliver lifesaving assistance and protection, including in disasters. The funding cuts have forced us to scale back humanitarian operations and to hyper-prioritize limited resources.

Responding to these challenges, **the Humanitarian Reset** undertaken by the Emergency Relief Coordinator in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is strengthening the coordination, effectiveness and efficiency of principled humanitarian assistance, including in disasters.

Aligned with and complementing the Humanitarian Reset, **the New Humanitarian Compact** under the UN80 initiative provides a blueprint to deliver faster, leaner and more accountable support to people in humanitarian crises, and maximize the impact of every dollar, including in disaster response.

Against this backdrop, we remain steadfast in enhancing our capacity, agility and readiness to respond to disasters, in support of affected governments and communities.

Mr. Chair,

Humanitarian after-action reviews and evaluations of inter-agency disaster responses often share a mutual finding: strong national leadership and response capacities, together with effective coordination and interoperability with incoming international humanitarian assistance, are paramount for ensuring a rapid lifesaving humanitarian response that reaches people in need.

This requires that we have in place the necessary policy and legal frameworks, customs measures and operational readiness, with national authorities facilitating swift access for humanitarian assistance that is guided by humanitarian principles.

These and other essential aspects of effective humanitarian assistance are reflected in the normative framework constituted by the humanitarian resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

These resolutions include, most importantly, **General Assembly resolution 46/182** and its annual follow-up resolutions on *Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations* and the annual resolutions on *International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development*.

In line with its humanitarian coordination mandate, OCHA provides Secretariat support for the negotiations of these annual humanitarian resolutions, which can inform and inspire deliberations leading to the legally binding instrument.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, OCHA commends the active, insightful and constructive exchange of views in the Working Group in 2023 and 2024 under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Lagdameo of the Philippines and welcomes the adoption of resolution 79/128.

OCHA reaffirms its availability to offer additional technical briefings and policy advice in the upcoming intergovernmental discussions, including during the resumed session of the Sixth Committee in 2026.

Thank you.