



Delegation of the International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies to the United Nations

Check Against Delivery

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ON BEHALF OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED
CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
Agenda Item 86: Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters

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Mr. Chair,

On behalf of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, I congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Sixth Committee.

Today, disasters have become part of everyday reality. In 2024 alone, nearly 150 large scale or unprecedented disasters were recorded —affecting more than 146 million people and displacing hundreds of thousands of people. This year, the toll continues to rise. Storms, wildfires, and floods have swept across continents. It was a year of disease outbreaks – Ebola and cholera. It was also a year of deadly earthquakes, devastating families and communities in Myanmar, Afghanistan, and now our thoughts are with the Philippines.

We do not know what next year will bring, but we do know that no one is immune to hazards. Every country — large or small, developed or developing — must be ready.

Mr. Chair,

Every day, my Red Cross and Red Crescent colleagues in communities around the world witness why a legally binding instrument on the protection of persons in disasters (PPED) is essential. This is a historic opportunity, and we commend this Committee (General Assembly – Sixth Committee) for agreeing to develop a treaty that can better protect people — especially the most vulnerable — and save lives.

While progress has been made, the international legal landscape remains fragmented, with persistent gaps and challenges. This treaty can change that. It will support States to strengthen preparedness, reduce the risk of disasters, and ensure that, when a disaster strikes, quality and principled humanitarian assistance reaches those in need as fast as possible. In speaking with many States, we understandably heard concerns about safeguarding sovereignty while minimizing bureaucratic impediments. From the IFRC's perspective, the treaty can protect sovereignty by providing that affected States request external assistance based on the needs they have identified and by deciding what types of

external assistance to accept and from whom. Both affected and assisting States, and other assisting actors, benefit from clearer legal measures that enhance the primary role and responsibility of States in managing disaster risk and facilitating coordination. After an earthquake, like the ones in Asia, every hour counts. This treaty will accelerate assessments, search and rescue, and international relief, and it will save lives.

The IFRC has submitted proposals on the draft articles published by the International Law Commission for the consideration of States, available on the IFRC website. We stand ready to brief regional groups or support States with any technical questions. We also encourage Ministries of Foreign Affairs to engage closely with their National Disaster Management Agencies and their National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society as auxiliaries to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, who both bring critical national expertise.

Additionally, the IFRC has unparalleled experience and expertise in providing support to public authorities and regional disaster risk management organizations in strengthening disaster risk reduction, management, governance and protection. In light of this, the IFRC has proposed to assume a formal role and support States in the implementation of this treaty.

In closing, Mr. Chair, the coming year will be decisive. Together, we can shape a treaty that closes legal gaps — and, most importantly, delivers real protection to people and communities affected by disasters.

Thank you.