



MEETING REPORT

REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE TOWARDS A **TREATY FOR THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS IN THE EVENT OF DISASTERS (PPED)**

Kingston, Jamaica, 24-25, March 2026.



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Executive Summary

The Regional Roundtable towards a treaty for the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters (PPED) was the second of its kind to be held in the Americas, co-convened with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, the Jamaica Red Cross Society and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) on March 24-25 in Kingston, Jamaica.

The Regional Roundtable brought together legal experts from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Attorneys General Chambers from CARICOM States as well as National Societies from four Caribbean countries and representatives from key government agencies in Jamaica involved in disaster risk management.

Discussions were held under Chatham House rules and focused on exploring key elements of the PPED Treaty including the foundational components of the treaty such as the scope, purpose and definitions; rights dignity and humanitarian principles; roles and responsibilities; external assistance; governance models for monitoring and implementation and the relationship to other rules of international law. Participants also discussed the role of National Societies in emergencies drawing from the Jamaica Red Cross experience of Hurricane Melissa and ways in which to strengthen engagement at national and regional levels.

Key outcomes of the discussions included:

1. **Shift toward preparedness, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction:** Strong consensus to move beyond a narrow focus on response to fully reflect the entire disaster management cycle and prioritize preparedness, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction, aligned with the Sendai Framework.
2. **Recognition of differentiated capacities, with particular attention to SIDS:** The treaty should reflect differing State capacities—especially for SIDS—through flexible, conduct-based obligations and strengthened capacity-building support.
3. **Clarifying scope, definitions, and legal coherence while preserving sovereignty:** Clearer disaster definitions are needed, with broad support for excluding armed conflict, preserving State sovereignty, and avoiding overlap with other legal regimes.
4. **Strengthening human rights, dignity, and protection standards with practical effect:** Participants emphasized stronger protection of human rights, dignity, vulnerable persons, and relief workers, with clearer minimum standards and practical application.
5. **Enhancing cooperation, governance, and implementation mechanisms:** Calls to strengthen cooperation mechanisms, clarify external assistance and consent, ensure light governance, and support implementation through peer learning and advisory roles.
6. **National and regional engagement to ensure impact:** Participants affirmed strong commitment to continued national and regional engagement in the PPED process, emphasizing inclusive, practice-driven cooperation among States, disaster managers, and humanitarian partners, and highlighting CARICOM's coordinated approach as key to effective advocacy, implementation, and sustained engagement in the treaty negotiations.

Background

Despite advances in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response, international law remains fragmented in protecting persons affected by disasters. Existing regimes—including international humanitarian law, human rights law, and sector-specific instruments—do not comprehensively define the rights of affected persons or the obligations of States and other actors. These gaps have resulted in inconsistent protection, limited accountability, and operational challenges, particularly in large-scale, cross-border, and climate-related disasters.

To address this gap, the International Law Commission began work in 2007, culminating in the adoption of the Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters in 2016. The Draft Articles establish principles covering disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, grounded in human dignity, human rights, humanitarian principles, and respect for State sovereignty. The process has gained momentum through successive UN General Assembly resolutions, most notably Resolution 79/128 (2024), which mandated the negotiation of a legally binding treaty by 2027, with a Conference of Plenipotentiaries scheduled for early 2027 in Manila.

For Latin America and the Caribbean—one of the world's most disaster-prone regions—the proposed treaty offers an opportunity to strengthen protection, improve legal preparedness, clarify roles and responsibilities, and enhance cooperation in line with existing frameworks such as the Sendai Framework. Jamaica has played a leading role through the UN Core Group of States for the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters (PPED), including co-tabling key resolutions and convening technical and diplomatic dialogues. The IFRC, drawing on more than two decades of disaster-law expertise and the operational experience of its 191 National Societies, has actively supported the treaty process. Building on the First Regional Roundtable held in Panama in 2025, the Second Regional Roundtable convened in Jamaica in March 2026 sought to advance Caribbean perspectives, particularly those of Small Island Developing States, through informal dialogue and expert exchange.

Day 1

Opening Ceremony

Mr. Craig Douglas, Acting Director of the International Organisations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica welcomed participants to the Regional Roundtable towards a Treaty for the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters (PPED). The following speakers were invited to give opening remarks:

- **Ambassador Sharon J. Miller**, Acting Chief Programme Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica
- **Councillor Andrew Swaby, JP**, His Worship the Mayor of Kingston
- **Councillor Richard Vernon**, His Worship the Mayor of Montego Bay
- **Mr. Marché Mackey**, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas to the United Nations, New York
- **Ms. Allasandra Chung**, OD, President of the Jamaica Red Cross Society
- **Mr. Necephor Mghendi**, Head of Delegation for the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, IFRC

Speakers highlighted the region's acute vulnerability and the long-term impacts of recent disasters, including Hurricanes Beryl and Melissa. Jamaica's leadership within the PPED Core Group, CARICOM's role, and the importance of strong international cooperation were emphasized. Local authorities underscored the frontline role of municipalities, operational challenges related to shelters, and the need for the PPED treaty to recognize local government capacities, community engagement, and access to resources. The urgent need for accelerating adaptation and strengthening disaster risk governance were emphasized. Speakers also stressed that disasters entail both legal and moral obligations, calling for a practical, inclusive, and people-centred treaty grounded in human dignity, preparedness, and cooperation, with particular attention to vulnerable communities. The importance of deepening collaboration between States and National Societies was also highlighted while calling for trust-based humanitarian dialogue and urging CARICOM to continue speaking with a unified voice in the negotiations.

Session 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Draft Articles on the Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters (PPED)

Mr. Andre Coore, Senior Assistant Attorney General and Head of the Legal Services Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica opened the session with an overview of the PPED process, tracing its origins to the work of the International Law Commission and the development of the Draft Articles. He noted that UN General Assembly Resolution 79/128 mandating treaty negotiations was adopted by consensus, reflecting strong political will, and that the aim is to produce a consolidated text by the end of 2026. States were encouraged to submit written inputs and participate in preparatory meetings, with negotiations expected to conclude within one year. He highlighted the significance of the process, noting it has been three decades since a treaty was adopted based on ILC work, and drew attention to the 18 Draft Articles, particularly Articles 11 and 12 on external assistance, which are expected to generate substantial discussion.

Role of the Core Group of States for the PPED Treaty

Mr. Coore's presentation outlined the role of the Core Group of States—an informal coalition of like-minded States supporting the PPED treaty—which includes Bangladesh, Jamaica, The Bahamas, Hungary, Italy, Colombia, Thailand, among others. Jamaica and The Bahamas have consistently played a leading role in these discussions and have co-convened several informal meetings to advance progress. The initiative received strong backing from CARICOM Member States, and Jamaica alongside Italy tabled the Modalities Resolution that set the parameters for the negotiation process.

Overview of IFRC's work towards the PPED Treaty

Ms. Liliana Lopez, Americas Regional Lead for Humanitarian Diplomacy, IFRC, outlined the IFRC's engagement in the PPED treaty process and its advocacy for a strong, legally binding instrument.

She highlighted the IFRC's two decades of disaster-law expertise, including the development of key guidance documents such as the *IDRL Guidelines*, global field research, and formal positions such as its 2016 position paper and 2025 amendment proposals. She emphasized the auxiliary role of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in 191 countries, providing operational evidence to inform the treaty, and noted the IFRC's envisioned role in supporting treaty implementation and strengthening national legal frameworks.

Ms. Lopez outlined key milestones toward a PPED treaty, including early recognition of the right to humanitarian assistance, the development of global disaster risk reduction frameworks (Hyogo and Sendai), adoption of the IDRL Guidelines, and the International Law Commission's work culminating in the Draft Articles. She noted recent momentum, including UNGA resolution 79/128 committing states to conclude a binding instrument by 2027, and the planned UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Manila to finalize what would be the first universal disaster treaty.

Report on the First Roundtable towards a PPED Treaty (Panama, November 2025)

Mr. José Antonio Hernández Vega, Senior Humanitarian Diplomacy Officer, IFRC, presented an overview of the First Regional Roundtable held in Panama City (26–27 November 2025), which brought together government legal experts and National Societies to discuss regional priorities for the PPED treaty under Chatham House rules. Participants emphasized that Latin America builds on existing regional frameworks, strong disaster-management experience, and preparedness systems. Discussions highlighted regional diversity in legal, cultural, and capacity contexts, underscoring the need for flexible minimum standards that respect sovereignty. The importance of community-based approaches and the roles of civil society, the UN system, National Societies, and the IFRC were strongly affirmed.

Comments by States on the Draft Articles up to December 31, 2025

Ms. Jessie Jordan, Disaster Law Officer, IFRC summarized States' written comments submitted up to 31 December 2025 under UN General Assembly Resolution 79/128, noting broad regional participation. She outlined key themes, including proposals to broaden the treaty's scope across the disaster risk management cycle; divergent views on the definition of "disaster," including alignment with the Sendai Framework and treatment of slow-onset events; and suggestions to clarify or reposition references to human rights and dignity. States also emphasized humanitarian principles, protection of vulnerable groups, strengthened cooperation, capacity-building, and disaster risk reduction. On the role of the affected State and external assistance, views varied, with calls for flexible language, discussion of consent requirements, and strengthened protections for relief personnel, goods, and operations.

Session 2: Foundations

Scope, purpose, and use of terms (Draft Articles 1-3)

Ms. Liliana Lopez, presented a technical overview of Draft Articles 1-3 which cover the scope, purpose, and use of terms.

i. Interpretation and Application

Ms. Lopez outlined the interpretation of Draft Articles 1–3. On Article 1 (scope), she noted that the treaty applies universally to all persons affected by disasters, regardless of nationality or legal status, but does not address anticipatory action. On Article 2 (purpose), she emphasized its balance between needs-based and rights-based approaches, the importance of timely and effective response, and its role in complementing existing international instruments. On Article 3 (definitions), she explained that the term “calamitous” sets a high threshold for application, that armed conflict is addressed through the treaty’s relationship with international humanitarian law, and that disasters are defined broadly to include complex and mixed causes.

ii. States’ Comments

Ms. Lopez summarized State comments on Draft Articles 1–3.

On Article 1 (scope), several States proposed expanding coverage to the full disaster risk management cycle, including slow-onset and imminent disasters, while others stressed safeguarding State sovereignty to avoid overly broad interpretations.

On Article 2 (purpose), States called for stronger emphasis on sovereign equality and non-intervention, with some supporting inclusion of the full DRM cycle and differentiated responsibilities for developing countries.

On Article 3 (definitions), States suggested aligning the definition of “disaster” with the Sendai Framework, explicitly excluding armed conflict in the treaty text, and reconsidering the threshold of “calamitous event,” with differing views on slow-onset disasters and the inclusion of economic, ecosystem, and cultural losses.

iii. IFRC Recommendations

Ms. Lopez outlined the IFRC’s key recommendations for Draft Articles 1–3:

1. The instrument must clearly cover the full disaster risk management continuum, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
2. Definitions should be aligned to the UNDRR expert working group on indicators and terminology to ensure coherence with the Sendai Framework and global DRM practice.
3. An explicit definition of “disaster risk management” could be added that reflects the full policy and operational dimensions of comprehensive risk governance. Recovery should be interpreted broadly to encompass both rehabilitation—restoring minimum functioning—and reconstruction, which entails rebuilding society in full.

iv. Roundtable dialogue

Mr. Coore invited participants to share their feedback on the foundational elements that should be considered for the PPEd Treaty. The participants expressed the following views:

1. Mitigation, adaptation and preparedness

- There is a need to move beyond mitigation toward adaptation, with strong emphasis on preparedness.
- Highlighted the importance of being prepared and stockpiling; the treaty should reflect the full disaster cycle, including preparedness.
- Underlined the importance of pre-preparation phases, addressing vulnerability and reflecting the Sendai Framework.
- Noted that the Pandemic Treaty definitions can serve as reference or guidance, but pandemics should be excluded from the PPED since a separate treaty exists. There should be no overlap with the Pandemic Treaty.

2. SIDS, developing states and capacity building

- States called for explicit inclusion of SIDS and developing-state perspectives.
- Highlighted major differences between SIDS and developed states.
- Noted that capacity building is essential, yet currently slow to materialize.
- Questioned whether states have the resource capacity to operationalize the treaty.
- Emphasized that the treaty creates an obligation of conduct, not results—States act according to their capacity, but must still act.

3. Definitions and scope of “disaster”

- There is a need for clarity on what qualifies as a ‘disaster’.
- Definitions should be generally consistent with CARICOM/CDEMA terminology.
- Proposed that there should be clear distinction between ‘disasters’ vs. ‘armed conflict’ and ‘sudden-onset’ vs. ‘slow-onset’ disasters.
- Acknowledged that some ambiguity may be useful and deliberate to allow for broader interpretation.

4. Sovereignty, legal frameworks and relationship with other bodies of law

- Emphasized the importance of state sovereignty and that the treaty must not enable unwanted external intervention.
- Requested clarity on the treaty’s relationship with IHL and other international legal frameworks.
- Noted that the trend among States is to exclude IHL from the treaty.
- Highlighted that the PPED Treaty should not conflict with or duplicate other instruments.

5. External assistance and international cooperation

- Suggested clarifying obligations for external assistance prior to disasters.
- Recognized that the region faces disasters more frequently than conflict—treaty must complement existing regimes, and not overlap with established IHL systems.
- Highlighted the importance of support for community-based approaches and recognizing key stakeholders such as civil society, the UN system, National Societies, and IFRC.

6. Human rights, vulnerability and protection

- Emphasized human rights, especially regarding the elderly and vulnerable persons.

- Highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of vulnerability.
- Called for protection not only for affected persons, but also for aid providers on the ground.
- Proposed that the treaty should address:
 - Data protection
 - Cybersecurity
 - Abrogation of rights during emergencies
 - Mental health as an essential need in disasters
 - Types of protection envisioned for affected people

Jamaica Red Cross Society: Experience from the field

Ms. Audrey Mullins, Vice President of the Jamaica Red Cross Society, outlined the National Society's role in protecting dignity and human rights during disasters, drawing lessons from Hurricane Melissa. She highlighted challenges including reluctance to evacuate due to security concerns, communities being cut off, communication breakdowns, shelter safety issues, and identification barriers affecting aid delivery. She underscored the scale of loss from Hurricane Melissa, stressed the life-saving value of early warning systems, the need for adequate safeguards for the protection of vulnerable people and emphasized the need for community-centred planning, public education, and trust-building to ensure safe evacuation and dignified assistance.

The presentation generated the following feedback from the participants:

1. Dignity, respect and community trust

- Highlighted the need to ensure that persons affected by disasters are treated with dignity and respect in all interactions.
- Stressed that people must feel valued, drawing on experiences from Hurricane Melissa.
- Highlighted the risk of exploitation after disasters if dignity and safeguards are not prioritized.
- Recalled that after Hurricane Dorian in The Bahamas, an influx of illegitimate NGOs popped up overnight which undermined trust, requiring the Red Cross to rebuild community confidence.

2. Preparedness, readiness and operational systems

- Strong emphasis on shifting from passive waiting to a state of readiness.
- There was a need to focus more on disaster readiness as a core component of disaster management.
- Acknowledged that disaster preparedness requires financial resources, not only technical assistance.
- Stressed the importance of developing and implementing standard operating procedures (SOPs).

- Emphasized the need to understand who the vulnerable groups are and examine ways to mitigate access challenges during response.

3. Lessons from regional experiences

- Recalled the Bridgetown Initiative in Barbados, which focuses on disaster preparedness for small states and vulnerable economies.
- Experiences during Hurricane Melissa illustrated the importance of valuing people, maintaining communication, and ensuring dignity in response efforts.
- Lessons from Hurricane Dorian showed the need to prevent fraudulent actors from entering the disaster space and overwhelming legitimate responders.

Session 3: Rights, dignity and humanitarian principles

Rights, dignity and humanitarian principles (Draft Articles 4-6)

Mr. José Antonio Hernández Vega, presented a technical overview of Draft Articles 4-6 which cover human rights, human dignity and humanitarian principles.

i. Interpretation and Application

Mr. Hernandez provided a technical overview of Draft Articles 4–6, emphasizing human dignity as a foundational principle of human rights and international humanitarian law and reaffirming States’ duty to respect and protect it throughout all phases of disaster management. He explained that Draft Article 5 reinforces States’ general obligation to comply with existing human rights law, intentionally avoiding a list of specific rights to maintain coherence, while noting questions regarding enforcement. On Draft Article 6, he outlined the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and non-discrimination, underscoring their importance in protecting vulnerable groups during disasters.

ii. States’ Comments

Mr. Hernandez summarized State comments on Draft Articles 4–6, noting strong support for grounding the treaty in human dignity, human rights, and coherence with existing international law. Several States suggested streamlining Articles 4 and 5, with broad agreement that the right to humanitarian assistance is closely linked to human rights obligations. States emphasized that human rights, human dignity, and humanitarian principles should apply across the entire disaster cycle, supported inclusion of the principle of independence, and called for specific measures to address the needs of persons in vulnerable situations.

iii. IFRC Recommendations

Mr. Hernandez noted that IFRC’s recommendations on Articles 4-6 were mostly aligned with several comments from States.

1. Emphasis on the importance of the right to humanitarian assistance.
2. Human rights, human dignity and humanitarian principles should address the whole disaster management cycle.
3. Include the principle of independence as one of the core humanitarian principles.
4. Include specific measures to meet the needs of persons in vulnerable situations e.g. collection of disaggregated data on individual or collective vulnerabilities; removing specific barriers to accessing assistance; preventing, monitoring and responding to protection risks; and promoting the participation, representation and leadership of persons in vulnerable situations in disaster risk management efforts.

iv. Roundtable dialogue

Mr. Coore then invited participants to share their feedback on the presentation and reflect on which rights are most likely to be impacted in a disaster and whether human rights provisions should be in the text of the treaty or in the preamble. Participants shared the following views:

1. Value and purpose of Articles 4-6

- Some participants felt Articles 4, 5, and 6 do not add sufficient value beyond what already exists in international law.
- The articles should be fleshed out further to provide meaningful guidance.
- A multilateral treaty should set out a clear legal framework and principles framed at an appropriate level of generality.

2. Strengthening legal obligations

- Articles should impose stronger obligations, potentially through the use of the word "shall."
- Current provisions do not clearly place obligations on States or other actors.
- Participants questioned how to operationalize human dignity within treaty text and suggested establishing minimum standards.
- States may consider referencing human dignity language from the ICJ advisory opinion on climate change.
- Noted that the term "persons in vulnerable situations" is language used by the UN Human Rights Council.

3. Application across the disaster cycle

- Article 6 on humanitarian principles should apply to the entire disaster management cycle (prevention, preparedness, response, recovery).

4. Operationalization, compliance and monitoring

- Participants noted a lack of operational measures, such as:
 - Monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance
 - Tools to address country-specific operational challenges
 - Methods to assess how States are implementing the treaty
- Highlighted the value of sharing best practices among States.
- Suggested establishing national monitoring mechanisms.

5. Differentiated capacities

- The treaty could better highlight differences in State capacities, acknowledging varying economic, technical, and institutional realities.

Day 2

Session 4: Roles and Responsibilities

Duty to cooperate, disaster risk reduction and the role of the affected State (Draft Articles 7-10)

Ms. Jessie Jordan, presented a technical overview of Draft Articles 7-10 on the duty to cooperate, disaster risk reduction and the role of the affected State.

i. Interpretation and Application

Ms. Jordan explained that the duty to cooperate is a well-established principle of international law that complements, rather than diminishes, the primary role of the affected State, and extends to intergovernmental, non-governmental actors, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. She noted that while the Draft Articles focus on cooperation during response and recovery, the duty to reduce disaster risk is reflected across key international and regional frameworks. She emphasized that State responsibility during disasters flows from sovereignty and highlighted that referring to the State's "role," rather than "responsibility," allows flexibility for varying national capacities while affirming the State's central coordinating function.

ii. States' Comments

Ms. Jordan summarized State comments on Draft Articles 7–10. Several States proposed dividing Article 7 to distinguish between inter-State cooperation (as an obligation) and cooperation with other actors (as an encouragement), emphasizing the role of civil society and community-level engagement. States also called for cooperation to include capacity-building and financial support, with some suggesting a dedicated humanitarian assistance fund and stronger disaster risk governance measures. Finally, States favoured framing the affected State's role as an encouragement rather than a strict duty, to allow flexibility for countries with limited capacity while affirming the State's central coordinating role.

iii. IFRC Recommendations

Ms. Jordan outlined IFRC's key recommendations for Draft Articles 7-10:

1. Increase recognition of the auxiliary role of Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies due to its strong presence in communities before, during and after disasters.
2. Include recognition of the role of local actors and regional actors (e.g. CDEMA)
3. Cooperation should apply to all aspects of the disaster management continuum not only response and recovery
4. Disaster risk reduction should include a wider range of measures e.g. training, contingency planning, nature-based solutions

iv. Roundtable dialogue

Mr. Coore invited participants to provide their feedback on the presentation and reflect on how the treaty can best incorporate the notion of sovereignty while ensuring effective international cooperation. Participants shared the following views:

1. Assisting Actors: definition, certification and role

- Proposed that “assisting actors” such as the Red Cross could be defined in an Annex or guidance documents, rather than in the treaty text.
- Raised concerns about the definition of “assisting actors”; treaty should be clear on who qualifies.
- Suggested using the term “relevant organizations” instead of listing actors individually.
- Proposed “assisting actors” should undergo registration or certification by the State.
- Determining who qualifies as an assisting actor should be the sovereign decision of the State.
- Recommendation to examine the Pandemic Treaty on how assisting actors are defined.

2. Duty to cooperate and forms of cooperation

- Some participants suggested an expansion of Article 7; other participants proposed merging Article 7 (duty to cooperate) and Article 8 (forms of cooperation).
- Cooperation should include capacity building and technical assistance and should consider monetary support as a form of cooperation.
- Duty to cooperate should highlight mainstreaming disaster risk reduction (DRR).
- There is a need to clarify how cooperation and coordination are to be operationalized.
- Suggested examining the Tampere Convention for helpful language on cooperation.
- Cooperation should operate in parallel with sovereignty, enhancing rather than undermining the State’s role.
- Cooperation must respect state consent when engaging externally.

3. Sovereignty and the primary role of the State

- Some participants questioned why the treaty explicitly states the “primary role” of the State—argued this is already implied by sovereignty.
- Others emphasized that explicitly stating the State’s primary role is important, especially when multiple actors (States and supranational bodies) operate in a disaster.
- The primary role of the State is a well-established principle in customary international law and many national constitutions.
- Sovereignty implies that national legislation governs support, including the regulation of external actors.
- The role of the State should include checks and balances.
- There should be flexibility for differing levels of State capacity.

4. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and prevention

- Proposed that disaster risk reduction should be defined in the “use of terms” section.

- Agreed that a wider range of DRR measures should be identified. However, some participants suggested that DRR should not be expanded excessively but should fit within the cooperation framework.
- Recognised that disaster prevention is widely understood in DRM and includes structural and non-structural measures (e.g., land-use planning).
- Highlighted that disasters are not natural—they arise from vulnerability and human factors.
- Proposed that Article 8 (forms of cooperation) should apply to all phases of disaster management, not only response.
- Clarify the relationship between DRR and cooperation, including links to implementation mechanisms.
- Recognized that some disasters can be prevented through institutional measures such as early warning systems and anticipatory action.
- Provisions should be forward-looking, adaptable to governance and development contexts.

5. Flexibility, capacities and tailored obligations

- Obligations related to DRR should be softened to “as appropriate” or “within their resources.”
- Scope should allow obligations to be tailored to national capacity.
- Important to reflect variability between States.
- Proposed that measures that are highly technical should not be in the treaty text—they could be included in a protocol to maintain flexibility.

6. Humanitarian assistance fund and resource mechanisms

- A disaster fund should be included as a separate article.
- If a trust fund is created, the treaty must define how it works and how it is funded.

7. Protection of relief personnel and implementation measures

- Measures to protect relief workers should be expanded.
- States should have the systems and institutions needed to fulfil their obligations to protect persons within their jurisdiction.
- The treaty should address specific ways to cooperate, including during consent-based deployments.

8. Treaty structure, clarity and strengthening provisions

- The Draft Articles provide a good starting point but require strengthening.
- Need clearer definitions, especially for DRR and assisting actors.
- Practical measures should not be overly prescriptive in the treaty itself.
- Highlighted the need for coherence across articles and clarity on cross-cutting concepts.

Session 5: External Assistance

External assistance (Draft Articles 11-17)

Ms. Jessie Jordan, presented a technical overview of Draft Articles 11-17 on external assistance as it relates to: the duty of the affected State to seek external assistance; offers; consent; conditions; facilitation; protection of relief personnel, equipment and goods; and termination of external assistance.

i. Interpretation and Application

Ms. Jordan introduced the session by explaining that the duty to seek external assistance arises only when a State's response capacity is manifestly exceeded and is grounded in the obligation to protect human rights. She noted that offers of assistance are voluntary and subject to the affected State's consent, which reflects sovereignty as both a right and a responsibility toward affected populations. She explained that States may impose conditions on assistance and are encouraged to facilitate relief through necessary legislative, executive, or administrative measures. She also highlighted the obligation to protect relief operations from interference and noted that external assistance may be terminated by any party, following consultation and with due regard to the needs of affected persons.

ii. States' Comments

Ms. Jordan summarized States' comments on Draft Articles 11–17 on external assistance. She noted proposals to reframe the duty to seek assistance as a right and to soften language on offers of assistance to preserve flexibility and respect sovereignty. Views diverged on consent, with some States opposing limits on refusal, while others favoured stronger safeguards for affected populations. States proposed that conditions on assistance be non-discriminatory, consistent with humanitarian principles, and aligned with international standards. On facilitation, opinions differed on references to privileges, immunities, and freedom of movement, with some suggesting additional measures such as recognition of professional qualifications. Comments on protection of relief personnel ranged from calls for softer language to stronger obligations, alongside suggestions that assisting actors be self-sustaining. Finally, States proposed strengthening provisions on termination of assistance, including structured phase-out planning and consideration of affected persons' needs, while avoiding arbitrary decisions.

iii. IFRC Recommendations

Ms. Jordan outlined IFRC's key recommendations for Draft Articles 11-17:

1. Strengthen provisions on conditions of external assistance including the use of minimum standards e.g. Sphere Standards
2. Strengthen provisions on the facilitation of external assistance, specifically including a wider range of measures such as legal facilities, exemptions, permissions etc. for assisting actors.
3. External assistance should include anticipatory action and early recovery.
4. Strengthen provisions on termination, ensuring that termination happens only when basic needs are met.

iv. Roundtable dialogue

Mr. Coore invited participants to provide their feedback on the presentation and reflect on the ways in which external assistance could be strengthened and how to balance facilitation with sovereignty. Participants expressed the following views:

1. Duty vs. right to see external assistance

- Strong support for transforming the duty to seek assistance into a right.
- Participants agreed it is important to clearly state at the outset whether seeking assistance constitutes a right or a duty.
- If framed as a duty, there must be clear conditions governing when and how it applies.
- Raised questions on how to determine when a State's capacity is "manifestly exceeded."
- Acknowledged that historically, States are not obligated to provide assistance to other States.

2. Consent to external assistance

- Participants questioned how to balance the obligation not to arbitrarily withhold consent with the need to preserve sovereignty.
- Noted that if arbitrariness is restricted, there must be minimum standards guiding decisions to consent or refuse assistance.
- Raised concerns about situations where States lack diplomatic relations—questioning whether refusal in such cases constitutes arbitrary withholding of consent.
- Highlighted real-world dilemmas where States reject international assistance while populations suffer, emphasizing why diplomacy and dialogue remain essential.
- Noted that when States choose to accept assistance, they typically issue formal appeals.

3. Sovereignty and legal responsibility

- Strong emphasis on maintaining and preserving State sovereignty throughout the framework.
- Participants queried how obligations could apply to non-State actors, given that they are not parties to the treaty.
- Suggested that obligations for non-State actors could be implemented through domestic legislation rather than the treaty itself.
- Agreement that sovereignty must remain central while allowing space for cooperation.

4. Protection of relief personnel and security

- Questioned whether the burden of protecting relief workers should rest solely with the affected State.
- Emphasized the need for stronger preventive measures to protect relief personnel before disasters occur.
- Recalled that during Hurricane Melissa, both local and international relief workers required police escorts due to security risks.
- Highlighted the need to provide assurances to new responding actors, particularly in volatile environments.

5. Role of non-State actors and cooperation mechanisms

- Called for more balanced obligations between States and assisting actors.
- Encouraged use of cooperation agreements within the treaty to engage non-State actors.
- Recognized that cooperation typically operates through bilateral or multilateral agreements, with some States preferring multilateral arrangements.
- Noted that where States do not accept IFRC assistance, operations often rely on the National Society present in-country.

6. Standards, coordination and operational clarity

- Participants stressed the need for common standards to coordinate action on the ground.
- The international community would benefit from clear, predictable standards governing assistance and coordination.
- Highlighted the importance of setting minimum operational benchmarks to guide consent, cooperation, and response.

Session 6: Governance

Mr. José Antonio Hernández Vega, introduced possible elements for governance of the treaty, noting that the Draft Articles were silent on the issue of governance.

i. Possible elements for governance of the treaty

Mr. Hernandez outlined governance elements commonly found in treaties, including decision-making structures, administrative support, reporting and monitoring mechanisms, financing, and stakeholder engagement. He presented two possible models: a UN human rights treaty model, based on independent expert committees supported by OHCHR and funded through the UN regular budget—amounting to approximately USD 436 million in 2024; and a State-driven model based on the Arms Trade Treaty, operating through a Conference of States Parties and subsidiary bodies, supported by a small secretariat and funded through assessed and voluntary contributions with a significantly smaller budget of approximately USD 1.2 million in 2024.

ii. States' comments during the First Roundtable towards a PPED Treaty, Panama 2025

Mr. Hernandez noted that States did not submit written comments on treaty governance, possibly due to the absence of governance provisions in the Draft Articles or the view that discussion was premature. However, discussions at the 2025 Panama Roundtable indicated emerging preferences for a light and flexible governance structure aligned with existing frameworks, avoiding excessive bureaucracy, while including some form of follow-up mechanism or advisory body to support implementation.

iii. IFRC Recommendations

Mr. Hernandez highlighted IFRC's proposal to serve as a technical advisory body within the treaty governance mechanism to support implementation. In this capacity, the IFRC could contribute

specialised expertise on humanitarian and disaster-related matters, support monitoring and reporting efforts, conduct research, develop guidelines, and advise any the instrument's governing body on implementation issues. This is consistent with the IFRC's mandate on Disaster Law established through resolutions of the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

iv. Roundtable dialogue

Mr. Coore invited participants to provide their feedback on the presentation on reflect on the kind of governance arrangements that would be effective for the treaty. The participants shared the following views:

1. IFRC's proposed role in treaty governance

- Noted a shift in IFRC's proposal from a secretariat role to an advisory role.
- This reflects IFRC's core mandate of supporting implementation through technical assistance, rather than managing implementation directly.

2. Reporting and review mechanisms

- Proposed exploring a Universal Periodic Review (UPR)-style model, where IFRC could contribute expert input or reports.
- Suggested that reporting mechanisms could be designed to inform and guide capacity-building efforts, rather than serve as purely compliance-based tools.

3. State capacity and reporting burdens

- Question raised as to whether States have the capacity to take on additional reporting obligations, given existing international reporting requirements.
- Highlighted concern about overburdening States, particularly those with limited administrative resources.
- Raised concerns about implications for SIDS and the UNFCCC/Paris Agreement obligations.

4. Member-state-driven approaches and best practices

- Considered whether States would be more receptive to a member-state-driven process, focused on peer learning rather than oversight.
- Agreement that States could report on best practices and seek to align treaty reporting with existing mechanisms and frameworks to reduce duplication.

Session 7: Relationship to other rules of international law

Relationship to other rules of international law (Draft Article 18)

Ms. Liliana Lopez, provided remarks on Draft Article 18, which addresses the relationship between the treaty and other bodies of international law. She noted that Draft Article 18(1) preserves the

application of existing legal regimes without prejudice, including international human rights, refugee, environmental, migration, maritime, and international trade law. She highlighted that Draft Article 18(2) expressly recognizes international humanitarian law as *lex specialis*, ensuring that in situations of armed conflict, IHL prevails in governing the protection of persons and maintains coherence with existing humanitarian frameworks.

The participants provided the following feedback:

1. Definition of ‘disaster’ and scope of application

- Participants emphasized the need to reconsider the definition of “disaster” in light of Draft Article 18.
- Questions were raised about how to address situations where a disaster arises out of or overlaps with armed conflict.
- Acknowledged that multiple bodies of international law may apply simultaneously in complex situations.

2. Relationship with International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

- Noted that under IHL, obligations apply to both States and armed actors.
- Some participants agreed that armed conflict should be excluded from the scope of the PPED treaty to avoid overlap.
- Highlighted that Draft Article 18 functions as a legal filter, helping to clarify which legal regime applies and to prevent confusion among different rules of international law.

3. Purpose and function of the PPED Treaty

- Emphasized that the PPED treaty is intended to ensure States take responsibility and assume clear obligations for protecting persons in disasters.
- Participants stressed the importance of maintaining coherence between the PPED treaty and existing international legal frameworks, rather than duplicating or undermining them.

Definition of ‘disaster’ revisited

Ms. Liliana Lopez, revisited the definition of “disaster,” comparing its treatment across international instruments and the implications for the PPED treaty. She outlined the International Law Commission’s event-centric definition, noting its high threshold and implicit coverage of slow-onset events, while highlighting concerns about exclusion of small-scale disasters and the absence of vulnerability considerations. She contrasted this with the UNDRR/Sendai Framework’s outcome-centric, low-threshold definition, which applies at all scales and incorporates vulnerability and capacity, but remains soft law and does not exclude armed conflict. Ms. Lopez also summarized the IFRC’s proposed amendment, which aligns with Sendai terminology while explicitly excluding armed conflict and ensuring coverage of small-scale disasters, acknowledging potential State concerns regarding sovereignty. Finally, she reviewed the ASEAN Agreement definition, noting its binding regional application and operational usefulness, alongside limitations related to its regional scope and treatment of armed conflict.

The participants expressed the following views and observations:

1. Exclusion of armed conflict from the definition of 'disaster'

- Participants noted that the IFRC is not the only actor proposing an explicit exclusion of armed conflict from the definition of disaster.
- The IFRC's proposed definition is an updated version of the Sendai terminology, modified specifically to exclude armed conflict.
- Other States—including China, the United Kingdom, and several European countries—have also proposed excluding armed conflict in their written submissions.
- The CDEMA Agreement similarly excludes armed conflict in its definition, showing regional alignment on this point.

2. Climate change, loss and damage

- Participants emphasized that any definition of disaster must not ignore the growing impacts of climate change.
- Raised the question of how to reflect the concept of "loss and damage"—as framed under the UNFCCC—within the treaty context.
- Highlighted the need to ensure the treaty can respond to climate-related and slow-onset events, even if armed conflict is excluded.

Strengthening engagement at national and regional levels

Ms. Jessie Jordan, invited participants to share their concluding reflections and opportunities for strengthening engagement on the PPED at national and regional levels. The participants expressed the following views:

1. Strengthening national and regional engagement

- Participants agreed that the PPED treaty extends beyond legal drafting and has direct implications for implementation on the ground.
- Emphasized the need to actively involve a broad range of stakeholders, including disaster managers and practitioners.
- Viewed the PPED process as an important opportunity for dialogue among disaster management professionals including National Disaster Coordinators.

2. Value of multilateral and regional cooperation

- Acknowledged that while multilateralism is challenging, it remains effective when States act collectively.
- Highlighted CARICOM's success in influencing the cybercrime treaty by coordinating across its 14 Member States.
- Noted the strong CARICOM presence across all breakout groups as a demonstration of regional solidarity and impact.

3. Operational impact and humanitarian partnerships

- Participants highlighted the operational impacts of the treaty and the importance of practical perspectives.

- Recognized the critical role of the Jamaica Red Cross in communities before, during, and after disasters.
- Commended the Jamaica Red Cross for its strong coordination with government authorities during the response to Hurricane Melissa.

4. Deepening collaboration and advocacy

- Participants reported a stronger shared understanding of the issues under discussion.
- Expressed willingness to deepen collaboration between National Societies and government authorities, particularly on PPED advocacy and implementation.

5. Commitment to continued engagement

- Agreed to return to their capitals with renewed commitment to engage actively in the PPED negotiations.
- Recognized the particular importance of the treaty for CARICOM States and the need for sustained regional engagement.

Next Steps

Ms. Liliana Lopez outlined the next steps following the roundtable discussion, noting that the IFRC would prepare a report summarizing the key discussions and perspectives raised during the meeting for States' reference. She encouraged States and National Societies to return to their capitals and continue dialogue at the national level, emphasizing the importance of sustained engagement beyond the regional forum. She also reaffirmed the IFRC's continued availability to provide technical support on treaty-related issues and encouraged States to work closely with their National Societies in advancing the PPED process.

Mr. Marché Mackey, Deputy Permanent Representative of The Bahamas to the United Nations, provided an update on developments at UN Headquarters in New York. He indicated that in April 2026, States will review the comments submitted by Member States and will also hear additional contributions from States that did not submit comments by the 31 December 2025 deadline. He clarified that this April meeting will not constitute formal negotiations, but rather a pre-negotiation phase aimed at informing and preparing States for the negotiation process ahead.

Closing Remarks

Closing remarks were delivered by the **Acting Senior Director of the Multilateral Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Mrs. Angel Rose Howell**, the **Director General of the Jamaica Red Cross Society, Ms. Yvonne Clarke**, and the **IFRC's Regional Lead for Humanitarian Diplomacy, Ms. Liliana Lopez**. They expressed sincere gratitude for the strong collegial spirit demonstrated throughout the discussions, noting that deliberations went beyond the treaty text to consider practical implications and realities on the ground. They reaffirmed the enduring value of international cooperation as essential to strengthening collective responses and protecting people affected by disasters.

Annex 1 – Participants

Government representatives

Jamaica (Host Country)	Ambassador Sharon Miller	Acting Chief Programme Officer
	Ambassador Shorna-Kay Richards	Acting Under-Secretary, Multilateral Affairs Division
	Angella Rose Howell	Acting Senior Director, Multilateral Affairs Division
	Andre Coore	Senior Assistant Attorney General/Head, Legal Services Unit
	Craig Douglas	Acting Director, International Organizations Department
	Monalee Gibbs	Acting Assistant Director, International Organizations Department
	Scott Mullings	Acting Crown Counsel, Legal Unit
	Dayton Thomas	Foreign Service Officer
	Kevaughn-Akil Chambers	Foreign Service Officer
	Sherise Gayle	Senior Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Chambers
	Shelly-ann Thompson	Assistant Attorney General, Attorney General's Chambers
	John-Paul Watson	Senior Assistant Attorney General, Ministry of Labour and Social Security
	Jacqueline Shepherd	Director, Disaster Rehabilitation and Welfare Manager, Ministry of Labour and Social Security
	Dr. Toni-Ann Miller	Director, Oceans and the Blue Economy (Acting), Ministry of Water, Environment and Climate Change
	Peta-Gaye Rookwood	Senior Assistant Attorney General (Acting), Office of Disaster Preparedness and

		Emergency Management (National Recovery), Office of the Prime Minister
	Erica Harris-Henry	Policy analyst, International Security Relations, Ministry of National Security and Peace
	Terry Forrester	Parish Disaster Coordinator, Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation
Antigua and Barbuda	Annetta Jackson	Crown Counsel, Attorney General Office
The Bahamas	Marche Mackey	Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Bahamas to the UN in New York
	Alveta Knight	Consul General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Bianca Brown	Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Barbados	Kerry Hinds	Director, Department of Emergency Management
	Joanna Benn-Griffith	Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Grenada	Kymmala Francis	Foreign Service Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Export Development
Saint Lucia	Aisha Baptiste	Legal Officer, Ministry of External Affairs, International Trade, Civil Aviation and Diaspora Affairs
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Regena Browne	Crown Counsel, Attorney General's Chambers, Ministry of Legal Affairs
Trinidad and Tobago	Leandrea Lutchman	Legal Research Officer, Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

National Societies and IFRC

Jamaica Red Cross (Host National Society)	Allassandra Chung	President
	Audrey Mullings	Vice President
	Yvonne Clarke	Director General
	Esther Pinnock	Public Relations Officer

	Sheryl Shirley-Haynes	Legal Advisor
	Jean M. Harrison	Volunteer
Antigua and Barbuda Red Cross	Dr. Jose Humphreys	President
Bahamas Red Cross	Edison Sumner	President
Barbados Red Cross	Fabianna Alexander	President
Suriname Red Cross	Glenn Wijngaarde	Director General
IFRC	Necephor Mghendi	Head of Delegation, English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean
	Jessie Jordan	Disaster Law Officer
	Liliana Lopez	Regional Lead for Humanitarian Diplomacy
	José Antonio Hernández Vega	Senior Humanitarian Diplomacy Officer
	Saara Ali-Browne	Humanitarian Diplomacy Coordinator

Annex 2 – Key References

- [Draft Articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters \(2016\)](#)
- [Draft Articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters \(with commentaries\) \(2016\)](#)
- [IFRC's Proposals on strengthening the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters \(2025\)](#)
- [UNGA 79/128 of 4 December 2024 – Protection of persons in the event of disasters](#)
- [UNGA Resolution A/C.6/80/L.14 - United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on Protection of Persons in the Event of Disasters](#)

For additional information about this report or IFRC Disaster Law in the Caribbean, please contact:

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The IFRC is the world's largest humanitarian network, comprising 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies working to save lives, build community resilience, strengthen localization and promote dignity around the world.