

de catastrophe. Nous pensons par exemple au Règlement sanitaire international de

Switzerland welcomes the creation of a working group within the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly on the protection of persons in the event of disasters, as it provides an opportunity to discuss the content of the draft articles and to clarify certain points. Switzerland will be taking part in the working group's discussions over the next days. We would now like to underline a number of points that Switzerland considers particularly important, and which we have already raised in our statement at the 75th session:

First, Switzerland would like to emphasise the relevance of these draft articles aimed at strengthening the protection of persons in the event of disasters, in particular by facilitating international cooperation in this area and by setting out the obligations of key actors, in particular states, in relation to disaster risk reduction. The importance conferred to respecting the humanitarian principles and taking into account the needs of particularly vulnerable people within the scope of disaster response is also essential to us.

Second, it is paramount to preserve achievements and to ensure coherence with other instruments and mandates relating to the protection of persons in the event of disasters. This includes for instance the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations, the United Nations Office for Disaster Reduction's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the mandates of human rights organisations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Third, it is crucial that the scope of application of these articles is clearly defined in relation to international humanitarian law (IHL). It is essential to preserve the integrity of IHL and guarantee the ability of impartial humanitarian organisations to carry out their activities when disasters occur within the scope of armed conflicts. Towards this end, Switzerland considers it as important to include additional clarifications concerning the scope of application of these articles in relation to IHL. In particular, the very text of Article 3 should specify that a situation of armed conflict does not in itself qualify as a disaster for the purposes of these articles. Furthermore, the commentary to Article 18 remains unclear. It is important to ensure that there is no ambiguity as to the law applicable in a given situation, even in complex emergency situations or rapidly changing settings.

Furthermore, the rights and obligations arising from international humanitarian law must not be weakened by a more restrictive practice during peacetime relief operations, as this could have repercussions on operations carried out during armed conflicts.

The primary purpose of these draft articles must be to save lives by facilitating disaster relief operations. It is with this in mind that we look forward to continuing the discussion of these points within the working group.

Thank you.

Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations
Mission permanente de la Suisse auprès des Nations Unies

633 Third Avenue, 29th floor, New York, NY 10017-6706
Tel. +1 212 286 1540, fax +1 212 286 1555, www.dfae.admin.ch/missny