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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

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PROTECTION OF PERSONS IN THE EVENT OF DISASTERS t DEBATE

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Delivered by Greg Reisman

We welcome the opportunity to have a further substantive discussion on the draft articles on the protection of persons in the event of disasters. Throughout 2024 we have continued to see the impact of disasters in every continent, from flooding, landslides and record-breaking cyclonic storms to wildfires. These are often related to the impact of climate change and, as highlighted by our Foreign Secretary in his recent speech on the climate and nature crisis, they are failures of politics, of regulations, and of international cooperation.

While much is done to mitigate the worst impacts of hazards and to respond effectively when they become disasters, in too many instances the efforts to reduce disaster risk and respond to disasters is weak. Poor and marginalised communities and groups, including women and girls, in countries with lower income or affected by fragility are the worst-affected when disasters destroy homes, communities and economies.

We continue to see affected States and local actors at the forefront of protecting their own populations and leading their own recovery. We pay tribute to the first responders who are often also the people most affected by the disasters. In this discussion it is important to note the principle of sovereignty of States and the primary role of affected States in responding to disasters. We also recognise the continued role played by other States, regional organisations, the UN system, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international NGOs in striving to reduce disaster risk and assist populations affected by disaster. The humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are of enduring relevance.

The UK has a long-standing commitment to providing assistance directly, or through partners, in humanitarian emergencies. We aim to respond in ways that support the needs of the responsible authorities building to Malawi ahead of the flooding or working through the regional coordination mechanism in the Caribbean to provide aid supplies in the aftermath of hurricane Beryl. Further, as part of our promotion of anticipatory and early action, the UK endorsed the

