

NGO statement on UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons

Dear Chair,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

The publication of the report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, the appointment of the Special Adviser on Solutions and the launch of the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement represent key steps to advance collective engagements and generate the changes needed to prevent and respond to increasing internal displacement worldwide.

The participatory approach characterizing those processes and NGOs' opportunities to help shape collective strategies to resolve protracted displacement was appreciated, as was UNHCR's active engagement to support the High-Level Panel's work and its facilitation of IDPs participation.

With a record **59.1 million IDPs in late 2021, 33 million of whom are children and young people**, concrete engagement is crucial. Over **80% of all conflict-related displacements in 2021 took place in Sub-Saharan Africa**, with 5.1 million displacements in **Ethiopia** alone. **Prevailing insecurity in countries such as Iraq and Syria also forced many secondary or third movements**. Moreover, those global figures do not include the 8 million people displaced within **Ukraine**.

Internal displacement has reached record levels, doubling over the past ten years and the scale is expected to continue rising as conflicts and crises multiply, last longer and climate change impacts are felt.

While we welcome the latest achievements, we urge immediate actions to fully prevent, respond, and find durable solutions to internal displacement. The realization of the Action Agenda should go beyond the sole UN system, at States level. **We encourage UNHCR to advocate for all actors to maintain the momentum and implement the High-Level Panel's recommendations.**

- *Regarding the Action Agenda, we share the following recommendations:*

First, with the Steering Group and the Special Adviser, the Secretary-General clearly committed to strengthening UN leadership. The "whole-of-society approach", including strong involvement of civil society, is a crucial element of the Agenda. However, we currently lack visibility on its operationalization and ways to actively engage.

We advocated to be more systematically included in the Agenda, and suggested **NGO representation in the Steering Group**. The current set-up of a small UN group is lacking NGOs and civil society expertise and operational experience. Moreover, we recommended defining precisely **NGO interactions with the Special Adviser**, who will lead collective efforts on solutions. Particularly, the critical voices of **local organizations, including IDPs- and women-led organizations**, must be included in such processes and interactions.

As a member of the Steering Group, UNHCR has a key role in the implementation of the Agenda both at global and national levels. **We call on UNHCR to support these recommendations and to ensure the effective participation of NGOs by advocating for their inclusion in specific mechanisms.**

Second, NGOs welcome the integration of funding for solutions as a key element of the Agenda, however, concerns remain about the financing window under the UN Joint SDG Fund being only accessible to UN agencies, and leaving NGOs and IDP organizations behind. **We invite UNHCR and States to acknowledge this** and in line with localisation commitments, **ensure access to the fund for non-UN actors**. NGOs are critically important in solutions programming and long-term activities and can be strongly impacted by lack of funding. New and creative mechanisms for quality, long-term, flexible funding for NGOs including IDPs-led organizations is needed.

Third, all relevant UN agencies will develop institutional plans, by late 2022, to reinforce their internal capacities and engagement on solutions to internal displacement. While this process is ongoing, **we are interested in providing inputs for the development of UNHCR's plan** and welcome further information on how NGOs, including local organizations, can be involved, and supported.

Fourth, the GP2.0 platform's role, assembling initiatives and capacities on solutions to internal displacement, is well recognized. **NGOs, however, invite UNHCR as co-chair of the GP2.0 to advocate for the formalization of its Terms of Reference and specific role in the Action Agenda roll-out**. A clarification of its mandate is important to ensure the full participation of key agencies, transparency, and accountability.

- *Regarding UNHCR actions and policy processes:*

The UN commitment to developing an *Agenda for Protection* allows reaffirming that the protection of crisis-affected populations is fundamental to its purpose and values and for more predictable and effective responses. **We recommend UNHCR ensures that internal displacement is clearly mentioned among the biggest upcoming protection challenges**, and that specific response measures are presented. The comprehensive approach including prevention, response, and solutions simultaneously, and the whole-of-society approach should be reiterated in this Agenda, ensuring active NGO participation, including local organizations.

We also welcome the recent IDP Protection Expert Group establishment and we invite its active role in this process.

With UNHCR's involvement in the **IASC review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement**, NGOs welcome further information regarding its contributions and our potential involvement. Once again, we underscore IDPs' and women-led organizations' participation. **Clusters and coordination groups** can enable local civil society participation by reducing barriers to participation, including prioritizing local languages in meetings, and promoting context-specific communication methodologies. We urge UNHCR to model new approaches and good practices in its own leadership of clusters and coordination groups, drawing on learning and recommendations from CSOs.

Finally, we appreciate UNHCR's reporting on its engagement in situations of internal displacement and the roll-out of its 2019 IDP Policy. NGOs stand ready to provide contributions to the evaluation process planned for 2022 and encourage more information particularly on how inputs from local and IDPs-led organizations will be solicited and incorporated.

In conclusion, UNHCR and States should seize all opportunities to realize the High-Level Panel's ambition of countering the 'invisibility' of internal displacement issues. The Action Agenda is indeed a key step, but mobilization beyond the UN system is urgent, including at national and regional levels.

Further details are available at icvnetwork.org

Thank you.