

NGO statement on UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. This statement was drafted in consultation with a wide range of NGOs.

This last year has been critical to step up global efforts for the prevention of and to find solutions to internal displacement. The publication of the report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, the appointment of Mr. Robert Andrew Piper as Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement and just last week the launch of the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement represent key steps to advance collective engagements and generate the changes needed to respond to the increasing numbers of internally displaced persons around the globe.

We express our appreciation for the participatory approach that characterized those processes and the opportunity we had to contribute to shaping collective strategies to resolve protracted displacement. We welcome the active engagement of UNHCR to contribute to and support the High-Level Panel, and its facilitation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) participation in this process.

Concrete engagement is more urgent than ever with a record of **59.1 million people living in internal displacement at the end of 2021, 33 million of whom are children and young people under the age of 25.**

According to the latest [Global Report on Internal Displacement](#) by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, a total of 38 million internal displacements took place in 2021, 14,4 million triggered by violence and conflict, and 23.7 million by disasters. **More than 80% of all conflict-related displacements in 2021 took place in Sub-Saharan Africa**, with displacements in Ethiopia alone accounting for 5.1 million, the highest number for a single country since data is available. **Prevailing insecurity in countries such as Iraq and Syria forced many IDPs to flee for a second or third time.**

It is to be noted that those global figures do not include the impact of the conflict in **Ukraine**, that forced 8 million people into internal displacement as of May.

There are twice as many IDPs today as there were ten years ago. The number of people living in internal displacement has reached record levels and is expected to continue to rise as conflicts and crises are multiplying and lasting longer. Also, the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that displacement linked to climate change impacts is likely to rise unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, and adaptation measures increased.

While we welcome the latest achievements, we urge them to be followed by immediate actions to fully accomplish their objectives to prevent, respond and find durable solutions to internal displacement. The realization of the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda should be accompanied by efforts beyond the sole UN system, at member States level. **We encourage UNHCR to advocate for all actors to keep up the momentum and engage in initiatives to implement the High-Level Panel's recommendations.**

- *With regards to the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on internal displacement implementation, we take this opportunity to share a few recommendations.*

NGOs' participation in UN Secretary-General Action Agenda on internal displacement mechanisms and Steering Group

By establishing a Steering Group and appointing a Special Adviser, the Secretary-General clearly committed to strengthen UN leadership on internal displacement. The “whole-of-society approach”, including strong involvement of civil society, is a crucial element of the Agenda. However, we currently lack visibility on how this principle will be operationalized and how we can actively engage with those mechanisms.

We advocated to be more systematically included in the different elements of the Action Agenda, and we suggested considering **including NGO representation in the global Steering Group**. With the current set-up of a small group of UN agencies, there is a risk of missing out on specific expertise and operational experience that NGOs and civil society can bring. We recommended as well to define more precisely **how NGOs will interact with the Special Adviser**, whose role will be to lead collective efforts on solutions, engaging with different stakeholders, including civil society.

Particularly, we request that **local organizations, including IDPs and women-led organizations**, are included in those processes and that specific opportunities are given to participate in the Steering committee, as well as to engage with the Special Adviser. Their critical voices are to be part of the implementation of the Agenda, that is, ultimately, about their lives and futures.

As a member of the Steering Group, UNHCR will have 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 specific mechanisms to include them in this process.**

Funding for Solutions

The mobilization of funding for solutions is another key element in improving responses. NGOs welcome the integration of funding for solutions as a key element of the Agenda, however we are concerned about the current focus on the financing window under the UN Joint SDG Fund, which is only accessible to UN agencies, leaving NGOs and IDP organizations behind. This approach raises the question of how this window will benefit stakeholders outside of the UN, who are critical actors in solutions programming and whose long-term activities can be strongly impacted by the lack of funding. **We invite UNHCR and Member States to take note of this and advocate for finding ways for ensuring access to the fund for non-UN actors, including NGOs**; not only will this support solutions for the protection of IDPs, but also further the localisation commitments which the UN, Member States and even INGOs have subscribed to in recent years. New and creative mechanisms for quality funding that is long-term, flexible, and accessible for NGOs including IDPs-led organizations are needed to ensure their contribution to the collective response.

2022 UNHCR IDP institutional plan

UNHCR, along with all UN development, peacebuilding, humanitarian, human rights, and disaster risk reduction and climate change actors have been tasked by the Secretary-General to develop global institutional plans, by the end of 2022, to reinforce their internal capacities and engagement on solutions to internal displacement. We acknowledge that this process is currently ongoing. **We are interested in providing inputs and feedback for the development of this plan**, and we would appreciate further information on how NGOs, including IDPs and women-led organizations, can be involved and supported to participate.

Role of GP2.0 platform

The role of the GP2.0 platform to bring together initiatives and capacities related to solutions to internal displacement is well recognized. **NGOs would, however, invite UNHCR as co-chair of the GP2.0 to advocate for the formalization of its Terms of Reference and its specific role in the Action Agenda roll-out structure.** A clarification of its mandate will be important to ensure the full participation of key agencies, as well as the transparency and accountability of the process.

- *With regard to UNHCR IDP actions and other relevant policy processes:*

UN Secretary-General Agenda for Protection

As part of his Call to Action on Human Rights, the UN Secretary-General committed in 2020 to developing an *Agenda for Protection*. This initiative represents an opportunity for the UN to reaffirm that the protection of crisis-affected populations is fundamental to its purpose and values, as well as to ensure a more predictable and effective response. **We recommend UNHCR to ensure that internal displacement is clearly mentioned among the biggest protection challenges of the coming years** and that the specific response measures for IDPs are presented. The comprehensive approach including prevention, response, and solutions simultaneously, as well as the whole-of-society approach, should be reiterated in the Protection Agenda, ensuring the active participation of NGOs, including local actors and IDPs-led organizations. We welcome the recent establishment of the IDP Protection Expert Group and we invite it to take an active role in this process.

IASC review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement and cluster coordination

UNHCR will also be closely involved in the planned Inter-Agency Standing Committee review of the humanitarian response to internal displacement. NGOs would appreciate further information regarding its contributions to this process and how we can be involved to support. Once again, we underscore the need to include IDPs and women-led organizations, ensuring they are supported to participate. Responses to internal displacement should be guided by the expertise and contextual experience of local civil society actors. Clusters and coordination groups can enable that by reducing barriers to participation, including prioritizing local languages in cluster meetings, as well as promoting context-specific methodologies for local actors to share information and opinions. We call on UNHCR to model new approaches and good practices in its own leadership of protection clusters and coordination groups, drawing on learning and recommendations from civil society organizations.

Reporting and Accountability

We appreciate UNHCR's efforts to report on its engagement in situations of internal displacement and the roll-out of its 2019 IDP Policy. According to the UNHCR centralized workplan, an evaluation is planned for 2022. NGOs stand ready to provide contributions to this process and would appreciate more information on how we can engage and how the inputs particularly from local and IDPs-led organizations will be solicited and incorporated.

We would like to conclude by inviting UNHCR and member States to seize any upcoming opportunity to realize the High-Level Panel's ambition of countering the 'invisibility' of internal displacement issues. The UN Secretary-General Action Agenda is indeed a key step, but mobilization that goes beyond the UN system is urgent, including efforts at national and regional levels.