



## **ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment 2016**

### **Addressing protracted internal displacement: a multi-faceted challenge**

Co-organized by  
the African Union (AU) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

**Tuesday, 28 June, 18:15 – 19:30**  
**Conference Room 11, United Nations Secretariat, New York**

This is one of the side-events to be convened during the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, in keeping with this year's theme: *Restoring Humanity and Leaving No One Behind: Working together to reduce people's humanitarian need, risk and vulnerability.*

#### **Background and objectives**

There are currently a record number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide as a result of armed conflict and violence. Along with the protracted nature of many contemporary armed conflicts, the average duration of internal displacement has also steadily increased. Some two thirds of IDPs today live in protracted displacement, lasting many years or even decades. They often face poverty and grim prospects of accessing education, health services, sufficient nutritious food, water and sanitation, housing or livelihood opportunities, in addition to ongoing insecurity. In the long run, the failure to rapidly facilitate IDPs' access to public services leads to loss of human potential and productivity, with increased risk of prolonged dependency on others and of being an additional burden on often already overstretched social safety systems and infrastructure. As such, protracted displacement not only represents a serious humanitarian concern in itself, it has a far-reaching impact on the wider economic and social well-being of affected societies.

There are many ways in which the current situation can be improved. Some relate to improved respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law, which can reduce the number of forcibly displaced persons, prevent their renewed or multiple displacement and facilitate their earlier return, by minimizing the hardship of civilians and limiting destruction of civilian infrastructure. For the many millions who already live in protracted internal displacement, it is urgent to improve their living conditions and offer them concrete opportunities to regain independent capacity, which may in turn require additional financial, material and human resources. There has also recently been a sharper focus on the need to strengthen the capacities of States to manage displacement situations effectively, without which it is unlikely that either assistance or protection can be properly implemented.

What is needed is a more holistic way of thinking about internal displacement, and a new dialogue that invites all stakeholders to the table to account for the multi-faceted nature of the challenge and to design creative solutions based on new collaborative approaches. The proposed side event would kick off that conversation.

#### **Discussion points**

Against this backdrop, the side-event will focus on the following suggested questions:

- How to improve respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights law (including on the usefulness of technical assistance/legal advisory services), including implementation of the AU Convention on the Protection of and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention);
- The role of financial institutions and development actors, including in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- How best to help States develop institutional and managerial capacities, guided by national policies, to ensure IDPs benefit from public services on par with other segments of the population, are empowered to take active part in their society in addition to having their specific needs addressed.

### **Intended outcomes/conclusions/recommendations**

The SDGs and the Secretary-General's new Agenda for Humanity aim to address the challenge of forced displacement. The current debate often tends to focus mostly on cross-border displacement and to overlook the plight of IDPs. Internal displacement is often examined solely through the prism of migration, with reference to situations where it may be the first stage leading to further movement across borders. This event is focused on internal displacement as a critical humanitarian and development issue which must be recognized and addressed in its own right. It will explore how, in which areas, relevant stakeholders can help Governments discharge their primary responsibilities toward IDPs.

From an AU perspective, the challenge of internal displacement is rightly identified as a priority in the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness. Africa has also led the way with the Kampala Convention on IDPs – an innovative regional normative framework which can be of inspiration for other contexts and needs to be matched today by equally innovative practical action.

Desired outcomes of the event are:

- 1) To reinforce commitments made at the WHS regarding the primary obligation of States to prevent forced displacement (particularly through greater respect for IHL and other applicable legal regimes), to protect and assist IDPs, and to create the basic conditions for IDPs to find durable solutions;
- 2) To bolster understanding among all stakeholders on the potential for improved collaboration in responding to the humanitarian, developmental and social challenges of protracted displacement.

### **Format**

The side-event will consist of a panel discussion. It aims to be as interactive as possible, with adequate time allocated for Government representatives and other stakeholders to intervene from the floor to share their perspectives and experiences.

#### **(Co-)Chair(s):**

- AU & ICRC

#### **Moderator:**

- ICRC

#### **Panel composition:**

- Ms. Alexandra Bilak, Interim Director, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)

- Dr. Chaloka Beyani, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons
- Dylan Winder, Deputy Head of Conflict and Humanitarian at DFID
- World Bank (TBC)

**Contact**

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