

**Ref: DPA/04/02/400.20****Addis Ababa 8 May 2020**

**H.E. Federica Mogherini
H.E. Donald Kaberuka
Co-Chairs,
United Nations High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement
Geneva, Switzerland**

Re: Response of the African Union Commission to the call by the United Nations High Level Panel on Internal Displacement

Excellencies,

The above subject matter refers. With reference to the call made by the United Nations High Level Panel on Internal Displacement on 23 April 2020 to provide submission on how to strengthen protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, I have the honor to transmit the submission of the African Union Commission (AUC).

First and foremost, I commend Mr. Antonio Guterres for his vision and leadership for the historic step he took in establishing the United Nations High Level Panel on Internal Displacement on 23 October 2019 and subsequently its establishment on 3 December 2019. I seize this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment as members of the United Nations High Level Panel on Internal Displacement.

For Africa, this development coincided with an important decision taken by African leaders declaring 2019 as “The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”.

Since the establishment of the High-Level Panel, the African Union has followed the work of the Panel with keen interest. This submission draws from the key milestones that the African Union has registered over the years since the adoption of the 2009 African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention). It is important for me to emphasize that in 2019 when the High-Level Panel was established, Africa commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Kampala Convention as a pioneering legal treaty on internal displacement not only in Africa but globally. Thirty-one (31) countries have ratified the Kampala Convention of which four did so during 2019. The Commission has also ensured the effective participation of IDPs in its key interventions and has galvanized partnerships in support of national efforts.

Africa hosts the disproportionate number of IDPs uprooted from their homes and livelihoods due to conflicts, violence, disasters, effects of climate change, health pandemics and locust infestations. Local communities have been generous in hosting the displaced, in many cases for several years. In the spirit of pan-Africanism the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and Member States have been at the heart of innovative actions to address challenges of internal displacement and in the process exploring durable solutions.

Nevertheless, the challenges remain immense. The AU therefore implores the Panel to recommend the development of robust legal and institutional mechanisms to effectively deal with internal displacement. It is important that the work of the Panel clarifies leadership at the international level and promotes investment for solutions.

The AUC particularly underlines the importance of the following actions, which are drawn from the experience of the African Union, its Member States and partners:

1. The AUC encourages the Panel to identify lessons learnt and practical approaches to **generate, build, and sustain the political will** to address internal displacement by individual African States as well as collectively at the level of the African Union and Regional Economic communities;
2. The AUC urges the Panel to identify practical ways of **enhancing effective early warning, early response, mediation, preventive diplomacy and peace building** in line with the 2016 Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness.
3. The AUC implores the Panel to develop a **global treaty on internal displacement** based on the blueprint provided by the Kampala Convention. The Panel should also identify other opportunities at the regional and among like-minded states for collaborative approaches in developing binding instruments on internal displacement. Collaborative platforms to promote inter-regional solidarity in support of initiatives among members of parliamentarians, civil society organizations and governments need to be identified and supported.
4. The AUC requests the Panel to identify lessons learnt and new approaches in strengthening capacity building opportunities to Member States and local institutions. The Commission, working together with key partners such as UNHCR has developed training on humanitarian law and policy with is a strong component on internal displacement. This training, also called Livingstone Syllabus, has already benefited several senior and mid-level government officials. The Panel should identify how such opportunities can be supported and further strengthened through international collaboration.
5. AUC recommends that the Panel **identify resources and supports opportunities that allow IDPs to actively and meaningfully participate** in continental and global processes. AU 2019 theme on refugees, returnees and IDPs clearly demonstrated the value and contributions that can be garnered from an effective participation of representatives of IDPs and their hosts.

Far fewer opportunities are available for IDPs to meaningfully contribute to global decision-making processes that affect their lives at local levels.

6. The AUC calls on the Panel to identify approaches to strengthen international and regional collaboration on **internal displacement data** among key actors. The AUC has established new entities to support collaboration on knowledge management and data on forced displacement and migration.
7. The AUC requests the Panel to identify actionable proposals for **bold institutional reform that clarifies global institutional leadership, simplify coordination and streamline accountabilities**. In many African countries, international humanitarian and development actors are playing an invaluable role in addressing challenge of internal displacement. However, the global humanitarian architecture remains inefficient and fragmented. The African Union is currently undergoing a series of institutional reform efforts to enhance efficiency. The operationalization of the **African Humanitarian Agency** is expected to address some of the institutional gaps at the continental level.

I believe that this submission will add value towards the fulfillment of the mandate of the Panel. I take this opportunity to express its readiness to further engage in the Panel's future work. In this context, I invite its members to collaborate with the African Union Commission. The Commission stands ready to facilitate this process and to provide additional information in relation to issues that are covered in this submission.

I wish the Panel the best in discharging its noble mandate.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Minata Samaté Cessouma
Commissioner for Political Affairs

CC : George Okoth-Obbo
Secretary, United Nations High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement
Geneva, Switzerland