

## **Submission by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement**

In response to the call for submissions, UNHCR provides the below suggestions for stepped-up actions by Governments, the United Nations and other actors to better prevent, respond to and drive forward solutions to internal displacement. Included are a summary of current initiatives of which UNHCR is a part, followed by selected key recommendations for consideration by the Panel, and then finally certain pandemic related considerations. UNHCR welcomes the work of the High Level Panel and the promise it offers to steer concerted attention to the protracted nature of internal displacement. We remain at the disposal of the Panel, including to engage further on any of the points presented here.

### **I. Current initiatives underway which may progressively inform the work of the High-Level Panel:**

Several internal displacement initiatives are currently underway which could usefully inform the work of the High-Level Panel. A short summary of these initiatives is presented below:

**1. GP20 Plan of Action** – A multi-stakeholder 3-year plan marking the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GP20), the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) 2018–2020. This Plan of Action centres around four priority issues: participation of IDPs; national laws and policies addressing internal displacement; data and analysis on internal displacement; and addressing protracted displacement and facilitating durable solutions. It is foreseen that collaborative activities on these issues will create changes that will contribute to reaching the Plan of Action's goal and laying the groundwork for a possible high-level initiative on internal displacement.

UNHCR has dedicated resources to coordinate the GP20 initiative and is committed to strengthen such work including by supporting planned and future regional consultations and exchanges among states on internal displacement, through co-leadership of the Global Protection Cluster Task Team on Law and Policy (TTLP), and by providing learning and communities of practice such as through the San Remo Institute and the global IDP law database, and contribution to Durable Solutions Initiatives and platforms. A concrete example of collective work done under GP20 and the GPC TTLP is an ongoing joint UNHCR and IOM study on legal, policy and institutional coordination on conflict and disaster induced internal displacement in five focus countries, Afghanistan, Colombia, Niger, the Philippines and Somalia.

**2. UNHCR's Initiative on Internal Displacement 2020-2021** – The UNHCR Initiative on Internal Displacement seeks to take forth the systemic and organization-wide transformations required to make the UNHCR response to internal displacement more effective. Launched in March 2020, and based on UNHCR's revised Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, the Initiative is an expression of the commitment by the High Commissioner to work more systematically across the entire spectrum of displacement, including through more

decisive and predictable engagement. Quarterly updates will demonstrate the impact of approaches in enhancing protection and solutions for IDP populations.

**3. Joint Data Centre (JDC)** – As a cutting-edge initiative on the humanitarian-development nexus, the Joint Data Centre is a collaborative effort of UNHCR and the World Bank. Its workplan for 2020 prioritizes IDP-data related activities which will feed into policy processes at country level as well as contribute to global norms and standards.

**4. UNHCR's Strategic Framework on Climate Action** – Many of the adverse effects of climate change can be linked to root causes of displacement and thereby the protection needs of those displaced. A significant component of displacement linked to climate change is internal. This Strategic Framework is strengthening UNHCR's holistic approach to the prevention, anticipation and response to climate-related shocks and the protection of people displaced in this context.

**5. UNHCR's activities in the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)** – In order to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and strengthen capacities at the national and regional levels to implement instruments that can prevent, reduce and address disaster displacement, UNHCR will contribute through the 2019-2022 PDD workplan to support regional exchanges of effective practices on preventing and addressing disaster displacement. In the context of our ongoing active engagement in the PDD, building on its origins as the Nansen Initiative, UNHCR supports the Submission by the Envoy of the PDD Chair.

**6. UNHCR's enhanced partnerships on Climate Action** – In order to strengthen collaborative research, anticipation and mitigation of climate change and disaster related impacts on vulnerable populations, including IDPs, UNHCR has undertaken enhanced partnerships with IDMC, NRC, the Potsdam Institute, IOM, WMO, OHCHR and other UN agencies, notably in anticipatory planning, such as predictive analytics in the Sahel.

## **II. Additional Key elements for consideration by the High-Level Panel**

Several key elements for consideration by the High-Level Panel are outlined below, with accompanying recommendations:

**1. State Responsibility and Capacity** – States have primary responsibility for IDP protection and assistance. Many protracted displacement situations remain unresolved due to limited state capacity, or absence of political will resulting in unavoidable substitution by the international community. While recognizing the imperative for humanitarian agencies to provide substitutional services particularly during emergencies, UNHCR's experience in refugee and IDP settings has reaffirmed the importance of the international community's catalytic role in building state capacity including by fostering laws and policies; governance preparedness and response measures; and technical programs addressing internal displacement and reinforcing participation of displaced communities in actions affecting them. *Suggestion is made to reaffirm the critical role of regional organizations, notably seen with the African Union and other regional organizations, and a recommendation is made that the Panel help identify ways to promote collective international action and measurable commitments for the development of similar regional and national*

*frameworks in other regions, as well as further domestication and implementation of frameworks such as the Kampala Convention. A suggestion is also made for greater linkages and experience sharing between regional organizations and all concerned national authorities dealing with internal displacement, with input/support from international organizations as relevant and useful.*

**2. Centrality of Protection and Accountability to Affected People** – Protecting IDP rights must remain at the center of international, regional and national action, for all humanitarian, development and peace actors. UNHCR, as a protection agency first and foremost, and as lead of the Global Protection Cluster, recognizes that protection in internal displacement and ensuring that people are at the center of what we do, remain the foundation. This includes understanding the impact of respect for humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, on IDPs, in conflict and disaster situations, as well as the heightened risk faced by displaced persons, including women and girls, men and boys, persons with disabilities and older persons, youth, persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as other marginalized communities, but also the strengths and capacities they have to contribute to a solution.

*With the Guiding Principles as the foundation, the Panel may wish to consider ways to ensure that internal displacement, protection and accountability to affected people are further incorporated and prioritized across the spectrum of prevention, response and solutions, and that an age, gender and diversity lens be systematically applied. This includes the Secretary General's Prevention Agenda with respect to disaster risk reduction, early warning and early action on preventing conflict, human rights, and resilience of countries and communities, reinforcing the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, with respect to humanitarian emergencies, and full integration in efforts toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.*

**3. Durable Solutions, Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus** – While internal displacement is increasingly recognized as not only a humanitarian, but also a development and peacebuilding concern/priority, significant gaps remain in building broader partnerships, bridging concepts, terminology, structure, not least leadership and accountability. UNHCR's long experience in refugee and IDP contexts has identified significant gaps and opportunities for IDPs that merit coherent attention. The New York Declaration, whilst not specifically addressing the issues of internal displacement did underline the need for greater respect of the human rights of all people on the move. Subsequently the Global Compact on Refugees reflects the fact that many of the fundamental approaches to achieving protection and solutions for refugees are equally relevant to the needs of the internally displaced. UNHCR's role with UNDP under the Secretary-General's Framework for Ending Displacement in the Aftermath of Conflict, and its strengthened institutional partnership with development actors such as the World Bank are just a couple examples of increasingly focused efforts to ensure that development considerations are brought to bear on all situations of forced displacement in order to achieve sustainable solutions. Building from the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions, it is suggested that the Panel explore concrete ways to achieve pledges in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind, including IDPs, and toward the World Humanitarian Summit vision to reduce internal displacement by 2030. *This may include addressing conceptual and structural issues to bridge humanitarian, development and peace partners and activities, in order to fully integrate IDPs into development and*

*peacebuilding programs, with reference to UNHCR's work in supporting profiling and measurable indicators for solutions, as recommended by EGRIS. The Panel may wish to recommend measurement of loss to countries/regions due to protracted IDP situations which will highlight the loss of human capital and opportunities, in attaining SDG goals and national development objectives. IDPs typically also suffer from a lack of access to housing which has an important impact on their health, protection, dignity, and in allowing them to reach durable solutions. There is a need for a better understanding of the extent of this problem and advocacy to address it. Designing effective and simplified methodologies for measurements, and actors to be mobilized for such activities, can be part of the overall efforts to finding solutions to protracted IDP situations.*

**4. The Need to Catalyze and Cultivate National Political Will** – Internal displacement leaves millions of people in vulnerable, often inhumane conditions, caught between parties to conflict not willing to achieve peace, and even after conflict, often neglected by political indifference. Suggestion is made to consider UNHCR's experience in protracted internal displacement situations and the role of political solutions, ranging from commitments to preparedness, meaningful peace processes and integration of the rights and needs of those displaced in national development plans post-conflict. Sustained attention to measures to reduce IDP impoverishment and marginalization pending solutions and addressing political and socio-economic obstacles toward achieving solutions are fundamental.

*UNHCR's experience, particularly at the community and local level, such as reconciliation and sustainable return and reintegration, as well as the key part played by civil society and national institutions, and the importance of building the capacity of national institutions to uphold and defend the rule of law can inform the identification of critical elements of the path to solutions that the Panel may wish to reflect in their own recommendations to proactively incentivize national political agendas in addressing and resolving internal displacement.*

**5. Strengthening Response Management, Coordination and Accountability** – Inter-agency arrangements to meet the humanitarian challenges of internal displacement will remain critical, with constant innovation around collective outcomes, bridging gaps with development and peacebuilding actors, as well as in transformative responses to global pandemics such as COVID-19. UNHCR leads the Global Protection Cluster and co-leads the Global Shelter Cluster and the Global Cluster on Camp Coordination and Camp Management and can contribute through dedicated consultations with its tri-clusters. UNHCR also co-leads the IASC Results Group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion, a service for humanitarian leaders and responders which provides response-wide guidance, tools and technical support on the areas of accountability to affected populations, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and, inclusion.

**6. Data and Evidence** – With IDPs representing the largest number of forcibly displaced people globally, more attention is needed to ensure their capacities and needs are identified, including different and specific needs based on age, gender and diversity characteristics. and particularly comparable and disaggregated by age, sex and disability as a minimum statistical evidence to address those needs and find solutions, by states and humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. UNHCR, in its capacity as a steering committee member of the Expert

Group on Refugee and IDP Statistics, was a major supporter and contributor in developing the International Recommendations on IDP Statistics adopted by the UN Statistics Commission in March 2020. *The Panel is encouraged to promote to member states the operationalization of these statistical standards, as the first international statistical framework for IDP statistics, complementing the International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics endorsed in 2018. UNHCR, as an agency and as lead of field Protection Clusters, has been leading on durable solutions profiling as well as urban profiling in several country operations, and would be pleased to provide the Panel with further lessons learned on collaborative, government-led processes, as well as where profiling exercises resulted in official recognition of internal displacement or where internal displacement and durable solutions were included in National Development plans, with reference to profiling findings.*

*In addition, as part of its Data Transformation Strategy (2020 – 2025), UNHCR has restructured its data human resources at regional and global levels, establishing a Global Data Service (GDS) and regional Data, Identity Management and Analysis (DIMA) units in each region. Strengthening IDP data is one of nine critical developments identified in the Strategy. The GDS will bring together IDP data from across UNHCR, strengthen IDP statistics, and work with key partners in IDP data, including on themes of data protection standards and the responsible use of IDP data. It is currently developing predictable web dissemination solutions for IDP data and facilitating internal dialogue on advancing IDP enrolment for protection and assistance, which also may be of interest to the Panel. UNHCR is also strengthening its efforts to disaggregate data on IDPs to improve information and visibility of the risks faced by IDPs of diverse backgrounds.*

**7. Strengthening Response to Climate Change and Disaster Displacement** – Given the scale of climate change and disaster impacts on internal displacement, UNHCR's Special Advisor on Climate action is seeking to strengthen UNHCR's holistic approach to the prevention, anticipation and response to disaster displacement, including internally, through legal and normative development, operational response, knowledge production and policy engagement. *Specific protection concerns in disaster situations need to be anticipated and addressed as early as possible in the humanitarian response in order to ensure that IDP protection considerations are integrated in disaster management planning and response. Specific operational guidance on IDP protection response in situations of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change is currently being developed.*

**8. Ensuring Policy Coherence in Global Policy Discussions on Climate Change and Disaster Displacement** – As UNHCR continues to actively engage in key policy fora such as the PDD, the Task Force for Displacement of UNFCCC, the Global Platforms on Disaster Risk Reduction and participate alongside partners at the sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and other major policy discussions, *UNHCR is ready to support the HLP in raising awareness on displacement issues in the context of climate change and disasters and the need to provide age, gender and diversity sensitive protection for affected populations.*

**9. Private Sector Engagement** – The Panel should systematically underscore the importance of private sector engagement at all stages of the IDP response. In UNHCR's experience private

sector engagement through driving the growth, innovation, job creation, and the provision of essential and non-essential products and services that displaced people may need is critical. *With this in mind, data collection efforts could take into consideration the specific data needs of businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly those of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). UNHCR remains available in order to share good practices, expertise and experiences, and to contribute to the formulation of recommendations on this topic.*

**10. Making the Case for Inclusion** - Building on the experience from the refugee field and the SDGs, UNHCR continues to advocate for the need to quantify the cost of exclusion. The costs are obviously not only economic, however in making the economic case, it may be possible to incite development actors to invest in a similar manner as has been done with the World Bank and other financial institutions for protracted refugee situations.

**11. Ensuring that the System is “Fit for Purpose”:** In looking at the new challenges that may lead to increased displacement in the future – such as climate induced displacement, rise of inequalities and marginalization – it may be prudent to ensure that the “system” can drive the change necessary as opposed to being driven by external factors. The High Level Panel, with its mixed membership from “inside and outside” the system might be better placed than any individual agency to drive this forward.

### **III. Pandemic related matters for consideration by the High-Level Panel**

Taking into account but not limited by the complexities posed by the pandemic and its anticipated wide-ranging impact on already vulnerable displaced populations, the High-Level Panel may wish to consider four imperatives that underlie the main risks for internally displaced persons, especially those displaced due to conflict and persecution:

- i. HLP members could amplify the SG’s appeal for a global ceasefire as conflict is a key root cause of internal displacement and a ceasefire will potentially prevent further displacement and even offer solutions for some internally displaced people;*
- ii. Include IDPs in national programs, starting from the urgency of adequate health care services and social safety nets responding to the medium and long term socio-economic impact which is devastating to already impoverished households);*
- iii. Urge member states and development partners to ensure that IDPs of all backgrounds are included and benefit directly from all State-led initiatives benefiting from international financial support;*
- iv. Advocate against any moves that risk forced return to insecure places of origin, noting the enduring rights of IDPs to full protection of all their inherent rights which cannot be undermined on the basis of exceptional measures within the response to the pandemic.*