

Member State briefing, December 2024 – Geneva

Talking points as delivered by Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement

Thank you, Director General. Excellencies, colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen.

This briefing is my final of MS here in Geneva in my capacity as Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement. I thank you for this opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved in improving our collective response to internal displacement over the last 2.5 years. And to share some thoughts on the priorities going forward.

I believe the Secretary General's Action Agenda has succeeded in reinvigorating how governments and the international system support communities in finding solutions to displacement.

Our primary task was to reconfigure how we approach the growing challenge of internal displacement. To stop approaching it with a humanitarian tool-box, exclusively. To build a more sophisticated tool box with which to support Governments.

I believe we have done so. But before I go down that path let me acknowledge that **the humanitarian community continues to be the backbone of the UN's response**. We reached 50 million IDPs with protection and **humanitarian assistance** in 2023. OCHA's country-based pooled funds assisted close to 12 million IDPs that year - 35% of all people supported by the Funds. An in-depth review by the IASC of humanitarian response to IDPs was also undertaken in 2023 which has provided an ambitious road map for the humanitarian system to work more effectively for IDPs. For those of you in the room financing humanitarian operations, your investments are making a difference in the lives of millions of IDPs.

The good news is that the humanitarian community is by no means alone in responding to this challenge.

Probably the best indicator of success of the SG's Action Agenda is that over the past 30 months, the Governments of CAR, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia have collectively committed to placing some **11.7 million IDPs on solutions pathways**, demonstrating that with the right political will and leadership, solutions at scale are feasible.

These Governments have owned their solutions challenge. Wrestled with the policy dilemmas. They have signed-up to a principled approach – voluntary and dignified, with all 3 settlement options available. They have almost all committed their own funding to the task.

Allow me to highlight 5 other indicators of progress that suggest we are on the right path.

First, many Governments have passed important new laws since the Action Agenda was launched, addressing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, for example in the Republic of Congo, Philippines, Mexico, Nigeria, Honduras, Ukraine and Chad. A new IDP Law and Policy Dashboard was launched by UNHCR this year. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons has been very active, releasing twenty-two joint statements with other UN experts, highlighting internal displacement in a range of contexts, including Afghanistan, Gaza, and Ukraine. The 10th anniversary of the Kampala Convention and the 25th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement in 2023 provided an opportunity to draw attention to the protection needs of internally displaced persons.

Second, we have seen a whole-of-government approach becoming more and more common. Brings Ministries of Finance, and Planning and the sectors into the task of building solutions. For example, in new Government-led inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms in CAR, Chad, Colombia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Niger, Somalia, and Vanuatu. Ethiopia, Nigeria and Somalia have introduced such mechanisms at the sub-national level. Local leadership has also been critical to these new solutions efforts – Governors in Chad, South Sudan and Nigeria, Mayors in Colombia, and Regional Presidents in Ethiopia and Somalia, to name a few, have driven localized plans for solutions. Participation of affected communities has also been a prominent component in these new government-led solutions efforts.

Third, armed with a new generation of Government-defined plans, we have been in a better position to tackle the financing dimensions of the challenge. Somalia will require around \$2 billion to move one million IDPs to a solution, for example. Mozambique's forthcoming plan will need a little over \$600 million to assist 900,000 IDPs. These numbers are largely representative of the emerging plans, although different housing standards (from around \$5,000 a unit in Nigeria to \$25,000 a unit in Iraq) are a major variable affecting projected costs.

Where will the financing come from? **First**, from these same governments. The Governments of Iraq and Libya will fund their own solutions processes, while Colombia is currently committing USD one billion a year to address displacement. In Nigeria, the Governors of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states have dedicated revenue percentages to their solutions plans; and land allocations have been pledged by the Government of Somalia. **Second**, the financing will need to come from aid flows. Development donors are working with these Government plans to identify synergies with investment pipelines and potential new investments. New IFI projects are also coming on-line such as a new \$300 million World Bank programme in Nigeria's Northeast and new African Development Bank investments in Somalia and CAR. Regular dialogues with Multilateral Development Banks have helped raise the visibility of IDP issues with development finance actors generally – for example both the World Bank and African Development Bank have incorporated an IDP indicator in their

corporate results scorecards in 2024. At COP29 in Baku, I joined a panel with a representative of the Green Climate Fund to discuss how the GCF and other climate financing mechanisms could do more to address internal displacement. **Third**, the private sector needs to be part of the financing plan. Two weeks, I was in Lagos for a first-ever dedicated roundtable with the private sector on investing in solutions across Africa generating a lot of great ideas that now need to be operationalized.

At the end of the day, we will still need to mobilize new aid investments for this effort, if we are to reach the scale necessary. This will need to be pursued over the months and years ahead. But no one is standing still waiting to get started.

Fourth, we have seen growing recognition of the link between disasters and displacement. Internal displacement featured prominently at COP28 and 29. The new Loss and Damages Fund recognizes displacement within its scope. Governments as diverse as Georgia, Mozambique, the Philippines, and the Bahamas have integrated internal displacement into their policies and laws. The UN disaster risk reduction community has been especially-active introducing mandatory indicators around internal displacement in DRR reporting, in ‘loss and damage’ tracking, as well as in Early Warning Mechanisms.

Fifth, Member State engagement at the inter-Governmental level over the last 2 years has substantially lifted the visibility of internal displacement more broadly and helped move this topic beyond the humanitarian discourse into development, peace and climate discussions. Our 30-strong ‘Group of Friends’ set-up to accompany my mandate has amplified our efforts, opening doors, raising funds, finding spaces in inter-Governmental fora. IDPs enjoyed a dedicated morning at the ECOSOC transition segment. At the annual joint ECOSOC-Peacebuilding Commission session last summer and at the Peacebuilding Commission last week. The Pact for the Future commits to “address the root causes of forced and protracted displacement (...) and facilitate access to durable solutions [for internally displaced persons, refugees and stateless persons]”. The new QCPR Resolution for the first time, makes internal displacement explicitly a responsibility also of the development system.

I believe the UN has followed through on its commitment to become more effective and responsive. Resident Coordinators have stepped-up and re-positioned this multi-dimensional issue with Governments and donors and inside UN Country Teams. A new Facility is placing Solutions Advisors in RC Offices to build capacity. A new Solutions Fund launched a little over a year ago to help UNCTs accompany Governments in this work, has received \$21 million in commitments from the Governments of Norway, Switzerland, Germany and the United Kingdom. Twelve UN agencies are implementing internal reforms to be more effective on internal displacement. Our data community has been especially active, strengthening national data systems, working with NSOs to include IDPs in regular surveys, and much more. UNDP has developed new development-oriented tracking indicators. UNICEF published a high-profile report on climate displacement and children. IOM’s new flagship Global Report on the State of Solutions to Internal Displacement

(PROGRESS) launched in 2023 will henceforth serve as the basis for a Biennial State of Solutions report for the wider UN. The list goes on.

We have seen some important progress in the way in which we understand and respond to this issue. In particular, we have a new generation of solutions plans that are Government-owned, Government-designed and Government-backed, politically and financially.

We have a UN system better organized for the solutions task, with development actors, and IFIs more engaged.

And we are ready to expand our new approach beyond the pilot-15.

Internal displacement is not, sadly, going away. There are 20 million more IDPs in the world than when 57 Member States wrote to the Secretary General asking him to give this issue renewed attention.

There is an important conversation to be had about improving our ability to prevent new displacements.

But in the meantime, our work on trying to resolve existing, protracted displacement has revealed some key elements of good-practice to avoid leaving people caught in displacement for years and years.

The new approach starts with a recognition that laying the foundations for solutions must start from day 1. The risk of the acute becoming chronic is high in internal displacement situation. Humanitarian actors need to tailor their responses to IDP populations, avoiding camps where possible, prioritizing resilience measures like livelihoods and education investment, involving Governments and development actors early in their response planning.

Avoiding protracted displacement requires that Governments truly ‘own’ their internal displacement situation. IDPs never cease to be citizens. They have the rights of all citizens. Even if – *especially* if - their social contract with the State has been profoundly damaged, in the act of displacement. International assistance is an important part of responding to internal displacement but it can never replace that Government responsibility.

Avoiding protracted displacement also requires Governments to get organized to address this challenge effectively. Clear plans are required, containing clear commitments to IDPs on their options for a solutions pathway. Clarity about who does what, particularly between the capital and the regional level. Mobilizing a whole of Government approach involving not only Humanitarian ministries but also the development actors like planning and finance. A recognition that resources need to reach the local level where the

heavy-lifting for solutions will always be done. All of this is not easy. Much of it requires difficult decisions around issues like compensation and housing, land and property.

Avoiding protracted displacement also requires the international community to come together to support Governments effectively. Solutions require financing. But the right kind of financing, which aims to provide homes, not shelters. Jobs, not aid. Which works through national institutions, at-scale. Some new thinking is required to ensure a minimum amount of development funding is made available along-side the \$5-6 billion in humanitarian spending each year. So that an exit-ramp is built, at the same time that we provide life-saving assistance.

My Office is closing on December 31, but we already started planning for this from the first day we opened.

Most of the work that has been accomplished by the UN team over the last few years has been with, and through, RCs and UNCTs. Those RCs and UNCTs are not going anywhere. They are better prepared, better resourced, better supported than 2 years ago, to support Governments in this work. A small inter-agency Solutions Hub will continue after my office closes, to provide ongoing support to these teams. The Hub will be hosted by DCO and will sit at the centre of a networked UN, able to draw on expertise from a cross-section of agencies. UNHCR, UNDP and IOM have agreed to finance this new Solutions Hub.

New instruments introduced in the last 2 years will continue. The Solutions Fund will be housed at the Hub. The Facility created to place advisors in RC Offices will continue. We are drawing the lessons of the last two years into new Guidance on Solutions which will be completed by December 31. A new guidance on urban displacement has been developed by UN-Habitat. Our IDP Advisory Board will continue under UNHCR hosting. 28 UN agencies also came together during the course of this year to prepare a system-wide approach to internal displacement which will help cement some of our new practices.

A small group of agency Principals have also committed to remain champions for this new approach on displacement solutions. The heads of UNDP, UNHCR and IOM will form the core of this Champions Group. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and Special Rapporteur on the Rights of IDPs will also join. Hopefully the Champions Group will also grow over the coming years.

Before Sharing my last requests, I want to acknowledge that there would have been no Office without the political support of the group of friends chaired by Colombia and Canada and without the financial support of the Governments of Germany, USA, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, UK, Canada, Ireland and Australia. Thanks are also due to UNHCR, IOM and UNDP which seconded a full-time expert each, to my team. UNICEF have also provided part-time support.

I save my last requests to you, our Member States.

The gains of the last two years are attributable in a large part to Governments in displacement-affected countries providing the vision, leadership and even resources to resolve their protracted internal displacement situation. Other Member States have played their part in supporting these efforts financially and politically at the country and inter-Governmental level. These gains need to be protected and consolidated.

To this end, I call on Member States to:

first, continue supporting displacement-affected countries diplomatically, technically, and financially, guided by the new approach;
second, support our new global Solutions Hub, the Solutions Fund and the associated mechanisms so they can keep supporting country teams and through them, Governments trying to make a difference;
third, keep internal displacement on the international agenda, ensuring dedicated conversations take place in relevant venues but above all, we need you to work towards some kind of regular, permanent forum for this issue;
fourth, accelerate your efforts on trying to prevent new displacements in the years ahead. More investment in DRR. In climate adaptation. In disaster preparedness. Promoting respect for IHL. These will be the key to reversing the overall trend; and
fifth, please engage in the evolving dialogue between Governments, the UN and the International Financial Institutions on how we can inject new development financing into solutions, to better support governments and communities to implement this new generation of multi-year solutions plans.

Perhaps most importantly, **sixth**, I ask you not to lose sight of the 76 million people this crisis represents. I have spent much of the last few years sitting with internally displaced persons listening and learning. It has been disturbing, humbling, inspiring. Many IDPs feel completely invisible and forgotten, as their displacement moves from months into years. Most IDPs are desperate to be self-reliant. ‘Give us land to farm. Jobs. Some capital to launch a venture.’ They are the first to ask that we move beyond relief to something more sustainable. And dignified.

Thank you for your attention and support.