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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights including the right to development

## Summary of the panel discussion on the human rights of internally displaced persons in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

### Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council decision 35/101, provides a summary of the panel discussion on the human rights of internally displaced persons in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The discussion was held on 26 June 2018, at the Council's thirty-eighth regular session. The report contains a summary of the conclusions drawn from the panel discussion in relation to using the momentum generated by the twentieth anniversary of the development of the Guiding Principles to further the promotion and protection of the human rights of internally displaced persons.



## I. Introduction

1. In its decision 35/101 of 22 June 2017, the Human Rights Council, disturbed by the alarming scale, complexity and protracted nature of internal displacements throughout the world, and noting that 2018 would mark the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, decided to convene a panel discussion on the human rights of internally displaced persons in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles, with a particular focus on their application and on achievements, best practices and challenges in that regard, as well as on recommendations to meet those challenges.
2. The panel discussion was chaired by the President of the Human Rights Council, Vojislav Šuc, and moderated by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary. The Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Adam Abdelmoula, and the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Volker Türk, gave opening statements. The Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Karin Kneissl, was excused. The panellists were the Commissioner and Special Rapporteur on refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and internally displaced persons of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Maya Sahli Fadel, the Undersecretary for Human Rights of Honduras, Alba Marcela Castañeda, and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Nazhat Shameem Khan.
3. During the ensuing discussion, contributions were made by representatives of 23 States and the European Union, 1 international organization, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions and 5 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

## II. Summary of the opening statements

4. In his opening statement, the Director of the Human Rights Council and Treaty Mechanisms Division of OHCHR stressed that human rights were critical to a shared understanding of the complex drivers of internal displacement. While the impact of displacement was indiscriminate, people already in vulnerable situations were at the greatest risk of being displaced and of suffering additional harm as a result. He noted that the Guiding Principles, which reflected and were consistent with international human rights law, remained the standard for the protection of internally displaced persons and that as citizens, those displaced, irrespective of the causes of displacement, were entitled to call on the duty of care of their Government, without exception or discrimination.
5. The Director highlighted links between internal displacement and cross-border movement, indicating that the two frequently shared common drivers and that internally displaced persons should therefore be considered part of the bigger migration challenge. Further analysis of the links between violations of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and migration was needed. He insisted on the need to address the factors that propelled people to move to safeguard their rights and dignity and to respond appropriately to the consequences of such displacement.
6. He also emphasized that internally displaced persons were usually among the poorest of the poor and that women and children were often disproportionately affected by internal displacement. Marginalization could be extensive, with internally displaced persons often unable to exercise their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. Because of their frequent inability to exercise those rights, durable solutions to displacement remained elusive, as demonstrated by the growing number of people living in situations of protracted displacement. Some internally displaced persons could move to neighbouring countries and become refugees or migrants in vulnerable situations. Keeping the promise to leave no one behind, a core tenet of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, required addressing the patterns of exclusion and unequal power relations often affecting internally displaced persons. Addressing those patterns required, in turn, supporting legal,

policy, institutional and other measures and taking a human rights-based approach that promoted equality and inclusion in support of durable solutions. It also meant the free, active and meaningful participation of all citizens, particularly internally displaced persons themselves, in all those processes, to ensure accountability and sustainability.

7. Finally, he said that the high-quality disaggregated data necessary to inform evidence-based policymaking were lacking. He also noted that none of the Sustainable Development Goals included targets for internally displaced persons as a specific group and that very few States had considered internally displaced persons in their voluntary national reviews. Internally displaced persons must be actively included in efforts to improve data collection, disaggregation and understanding of their experiences, but at the same time their right to privacy must be respected and data protection standards must be complied with. There was also a need to ensure that data could be used to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals for internally displaced populations. In concluding, he stated that it was only by addressing the underlying causes of displacement that more resilient societies could be ensured and future displacement could be prevented.

8. The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection of UNHCR noted that 40 million people, more than double the number than at the birth of the Guiding Principles two decades earlier, were currently uprooted by conflict, violence and human rights violations. He also stressed that the millions of persons displaced internally by disasters should not be forgotten. Some 18.8 million incidents of disaster-induced displacement had been recorded in 2017 alone, many of them involving individuals who had been displaced multiple times. It was more necessary than ever to refocus collective efforts on reversing that trend.

9. While some important progress had been made in addressing internal displacement, particularly with the launch of the Guiding Principles, much remained to be done. The Guiding Principles were foundational for the protection of internally displaced persons and constituted a compilation of relevant international humanitarian and international human rights law specifically tailored to the situation of those forcibly displaced as a result of conflict, violence or disasters. Over time, the Principles had become the authoritative point of reference for normative and institutional frameworks. Twenty-four States referred directly to them in their own national laws or policies. States members of the African Union, taking inspiration from the Guiding Principles, had adopted the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), a watershed regional instrument on internal displacement that would celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2019. The Guiding Principles informed the efforts of States and international organizations to prevent, respond to and resolve internal displacement. They were equally an important source of empowerment for the internally displaced themselves.

10. Affording protection was, in essence, human rights in action. It must be oriented towards people and communities, so that internally displaced persons could enjoy the widest possible array of human rights and fundamental freedoms, without discrimination. Protection also needed to drive humanitarian action, inspiring its operational design, coordination and implementation and interactions with development, human rights, security and political actors. He stressed that people and communities affected by displacement must be at the centre of protection work — by advocating for their rights, involving them in decisions that affected them, understanding the deeper reasons for their plight and seeking to improve their situation through hands-on operational engagement. Concrete, high-quality protection services must be provided to internally displaced persons, such as prompt access to professional care for survivors of sexual violence, legal aid to ensure access to justice and advocacy for and interventions on behalf of internally displaced persons when they faced an immediate risk. Assistance with registration and individual documentation, including to realize housing, land and property rights, was particularly critical. Examples of good practice in 2017 had included the rapid issuance of replacement documents to persons fleeing the Mosul emergency and the registration of property abandoned by individuals fleeing violence in Honduras. In that connection, he noted that the efforts made to reunite abandoned and separated children with their families in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and elsewhere should continue.

11. Protection considerations should be integrated and mainstreamed into every service or form of assistance delivered by the international community. They should inform its shelter, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), health and education programmes. For instance, failing to think through the layout of camps could put women and girls at risk of rape, abduction and other serious violations of their rights. Protection should also be the objective of laws and policies related to internal displacement. The Guiding Principles rightly ascribed the primary responsibility for protection to States. Developing a national instrument on internal displacement, whether a law or a policy, was a tangible act of national responsibility. In that respect, States were encouraged to consult the internally displaced and their host communities in the development of national laws and policies on internal displacement. Such consultations had been held in Nigeria in 2016, for example, and were also being held in the Niger.

12. Although laws and policies on internal displacement were to be valued and promoted, one of the greatest present challenges was to implement them once they had been adopted. Proper and specifically mandated institutional structures were needed, and they should have the necessary political authority and human and financial resources to carry out prevention and protection activities and develop solutions for internal displacement. Successful implementation also required that States be accountable to their citizens, including the displaced. Strong domestic institutions, such as the judicial systems in Colombia and Georgia, were an essential component to ensuring accountability.

13. In looking towards the future and building on the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles, the international community must remain steadfast in its pursuit of preventive action and solutions to forced displacement. The Guiding Principles were the expression of a vision that would make it possible to achieve that end, especially if they were reflected in normative and institutional frameworks that translated into action the principle that the primary responsibility lay with States themselves.

### **III. Panellists**

14. In her introductory remarks as moderator of the panel discussion, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons noted that the twentieth anniversary of the development of the Guiding Principles had been an opportunity not only to take stock of achievements but also to acknowledge the growing challenges. It was likewise an opportunity to step up efforts to prevent, address and support solutions to internal displacement and galvanize others into doing the same. Forty million people were internally displaced by conflict and violence as of the end of 2017. A further 18.8 million new internal displacements due to disasters had been recorded in the same year. In addition, an estimated 15 million people a year were displaced by development projects, a cause of displacement recognized in the Guiding Principles. Millions of other displacements were not systematically recorded, including those caused by land grabs, criminal violence and slow-onset disasters, such as drought. Without more attention to prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced persons, people would continue to be displaced and to remain displaced.

15. The Special Rapporteur stressed the continued relevance of the Guiding Principles, their emphasis on sovereignty as responsibility and on the importance of the participation of internally displaced persons in decisions that affected them and their applicability in all displacement situations, covering all aspects of an adequate response, from prevention to durable solutions. Although the Guiding Principles were the basis of several national laws and policies on internal displacement worldwide, all too often, laws and policies had not been fully implemented, and the ministries responsible for matters concerning internal displacement lacked the means to make addressing internal displacement a government priority.

16. The Special Rapporteur stressed that both the scale and the duration of internal displacement had highlighted the limits of humanitarian responses to internal displacement, contributing to renewed scrutiny of the effectiveness of the United Nations system within the context of the World Humanitarian Summit and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. However, without disaggregated data that made it possible to measure achievements, there was a real risk of failing to deliver. Responding to the challenges of internal displacement, protracted displacement in particular, could not be a humanitarian challenge alone, as there were also complex human rights, humanitarian, development and possible peacebuilding dimensions to internal displacement. Only comprehensive human rights analyses of root causes, and comprehensive responses, could assist internally displaced persons in achieving durable solutions. Such an approach must also ensure that internally displaced persons were engaged in and benefited from the Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined in the United Nations conceptual framework “Ensuring that no one is left behind”. An approach informed by human rights also helped ensure that effect was given to the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit to localize aid and increase the participation of affected populations.

17. Finally, she insisted on the need for strong leadership and collective action. She explained that, harnessing the energy shown by many partners to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles, she had worked with many stakeholders, including Member States, United Nations agencies and NGOs, to identify priority areas for action on internal displacement, resulting in the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018–2020. The Plan identified four interrelated priorities for more strategic, coordinated and collaborative action on internal displacement.

18. In highlighting the specificities of internal displacement in Africa, the Special Rapporteur on refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and internally displaced persons of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights noted that armed conflict, internal crises, disasters, the adverse impact of climate change, flagrant human rights violations, development projects and urbanization represented risks that could lead to forced displacement. Of the 55 Member States of the African Union, 35 were affected by the phenomenon of internal displacement, which, despite the multiple commitments to prevent it made by African States, remained a serious and persistent problem in Africa. In 2017, there had been 13 million internally displaced persons in Africa. In 2016, 70 per cent of new internal displacements had been the result of conflict and violence.

19. African States were willing to offer protection and assistance to millions of displaced people. In that context, a number of African States had already incorporated the Guiding Principles into their national legislation, policies or strategies. Several States, for example, had come together in 2006 to adopt the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which included a protocol specifically on the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons. The Protocol had incorporated the provisions of the Guiding Principles. Although the African continent continued to be affected by massive displacement, the Protocol had been the first legally binding instrument to oblige States to adopt and implement the Guiding Principles. It also served as a regional framework for providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons in the Great Lakes Region, enacting national legislation to domesticate the Guiding Principles and ensuring the implementation of the Guiding Principles in national legal systems. States such as Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic and Kenya had been precursors in adopting such protection measures.

20. The adoption of the Kampala Convention, which was the first and only legally binding instrument on internal displacement on a continental scale, had demonstrated the leadership and willingness of African States and their determination to move forward in protecting and assisting internally displaced persons. The Convention had been adopted in 2009, at a special summit of the African Union in Kampala, and had entered into force in 2012. It drew on the Guiding Principles and on international and regional standards and laid out a catalogue of commitments for a range of actors. It was a historic instrument that obliged States to tackle the causes of displacement, protect the rights of the internally displaced and measure to what extent durable solutions had been achieved. The first Conference of States Parties to the Convention had been held in April 2017 in Harare, and States had reported on their ratification status and the efforts they had made to implement the Convention. To date, 27 States had ratified the Convention, while 17 had signed it but not ratified it. Eleven States had neither signed nor ratified it. Many States had already

adopted national laws or policies on internal displacement or had assigned responsibility for coordination to an institutional mechanism. Despite the many measures taken, little progress had been made on the ground. The Conference of States Parties had resulted in the adoption of an action plan and the African Union model law for the implementation of the Convention, which had been in the making for many years.

21. In her conclusions, the Special Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights mentioned a number of steps that the African Union had taken on internal displacement, including the establishment of the Specialized Technical Committee on Migration, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in 2015 and the adoption of the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness in 2016. All 10 of the pillars into which the Common Position grouped humanitarian priorities were relevant to the protection of displaced persons. The Commission was also in the process of developing a general comment on article 12, on the right to freedom of movement, of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Finally, as 2019 would mark the tenth anniversary of the Kampala Convention, and as the African Union had declared 2019 the year of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa, efforts to establish an internally displaced persons' day, sponsored by the African Union, were also under way.

22. The Undersecretary for Human Rights of Honduras, presenting the experience of Honduras, particularly with respect to the importance of data in designing comprehensive human rights-based responses to internal displacement, said that in Honduras, gang violence and organized crime had resulted in an increased number of internally displaced persons, an increase that had affected many families and communities. In 2013, the Government of Honduras had established the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Protection of Persons Displaced by Violence. The creation of the Commission, which had provided a forum for deliberation, consensus and the development of more coordinated responses, had itself been a token of the institutional recognition of the problem of internal displacement. The Commission was composed of representatives of 10 state institutions, 4 civil society organizations and 1 municipal association. The Commission's implementing decree provided that its principal attributions were to initiate investigations, study the causes of internal displacement and identify the most heavily affected areas and communities. The Commission had identified data collection as a priority, so as to make it possible to obtain an accurate understanding of the current situation with respect to internal displacement and to tailor adequate and sustainable responses from a human rights and humanitarian perspective.

23. Since its inception, the Commission had relied on the Guiding Principles as an essential reference. She mentioned the 2015 visit to Honduras of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, who had formulated a series of recommendations that had also constituted an important reference for the policies adopted subsequent to his visit.

24. A study carried out by the Commission in 2015 had revealed that between 2004 and 2014, more than 174,000 persons had been internally displaced in Honduras in 20 urban municipalities. Data on the magnitude and profile of internally displaced persons had contributed to the design of policies and tools, including a draft law on prevention, support and protection in connection with internally displaced persons, as well as municipal response plans in two of the most badly affected municipalities. A technical committee had also been established to coordinate the development of a second characterization study in 2018, which had sought to bring information up to date, deepen the understanding of the magnitude and impact of internal displacement and strengthen national responses. Unlike the initial study, which had been limited to 20 municipalities, the 2018 initiative had aimed at national representation, including urban and rural areas.

25. In addition to the characterization exercises, the populations most severely affected by internal displacement, such as women, children and adolescents and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities, had been identified. One municipality had addressed internal displacement in its development plan, a step that would later inform its strategic priorities and the financial and operational resources set aside for them.

26. The Undersecretary concluded her statement by stressing that the existence of representative data, appropriately disaggregated and used with human rights and international standards as a reference, made it possible to design measures suited to national realities and, ultimately, to better protect internally displaced persons and offer them durable solutions. Lastly, she noted that Honduras was of the view that, in order to make progress with respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to keep the promise to leave no one behind, it was essential for States to articulate responses that encompassed the human rights, humanitarian, development and peacebuilding dimensions of internal displacement.

27. In her remarks on internal displacement as a result of disasters and climate change, the last panellist, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Fiji, stressed that drought, floods, intense hurricanes, cyclones and rising sea levels could have a devastating effect on the ability of the land to sustain human population. However, the lack of clarity in policies both nationally and internationally linking those issues had led to insufficient focus on the way national governments and communities should approach displacement and, as a result, to ad hoc responses not necessarily based on human rights. In addition, there had not been enough discussion of disasters, mobility and sustainable development.

28. In 2017, over 18.8 million new internal displacements caused by sudden-onset climate-related hazards, such as typhoons and floods, had been recorded. That figure had represented 61 per cent of all new internal displacements. However, there was no means of tracking how many people might have moved partially in response to slow-onset hazards, such as drought or desertification, or to development plans and projects. In addition, directly attributing human mobility to climate change was extremely difficult, as causes of displacement were multiple. Analysis was hampered by that complexity and by the interrelatedness of drivers of migration, while significant data challenges made estimation of migration and displacement under a changing climate problematic. She stressed that the links between climate change and human mobility should be integrated in sustainable development processes.

29. Responses to displacement should be inclusive, participatory and transformative, and, rather than entrench existing inequalities, they must be empowering, promoting equality and human dignity. It was for that reason that the Guiding Principles continued to be of such relevance and had the capacity not only to assist States to plan relocation and adopt relocation principles but also to introduce the concept of substantive democracy for communities. A human rights approach to displacement could transform societies, enabling them to empower themselves more fully. Similarly, human mobility, both autonomous and planned, presented opportunities that could facilitate adaptation to climate change and serve as an adaptation measure itself. Risk-informed development strategies and policies were paramount and had the potential to reduce vulnerability and enhance the ability of an individual, community or country to cope with, respond to and acquire the necessary skills to deal with shocks and stressors, including those caused by climate change. Nationally determined contributions and national adaptation and disaster management processes and plans could play an important role. Mobility, in her view, should be seen as evidence not of a failure to adapt to climate change but of a strategy to adapt to it.

30. If carefully organized and provided with the necessary resources, displacement management processes and relocation plans had the potential to reduce vulnerability and ensure that individuals, communities and countries were able to cope with and respond to climate-related hazards and support and empower migrant and displaced workers and communities. They could also transform and democratize social mechanisms. They could lead to the elimination of discriminatory practices and modify cultural practices that acted as barriers to effective participation and consultation.

31. The Ambassador stressed the important role of the Platform on Disaster Displacement and international agencies such as the International Organization for Migration in supporting national Governments to mainstream approaches to human mobility into broader policies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development included Sustainable Development Goals, all of which had an impact on internally displaced persons, that targeted both climate change and migration.

32. The Ambassador also referred to the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the global compact on refugees, to be finalized in 2018, noting that they offered scope for climate risk-informed action, in which reference to the Guiding Principles and to an integrated approach was key. In practice, the synergies among development, human rights and climate change were clear, especially in small developing island States such as Fiji. Climate change, development and internal displacement were indivisible, and planned migration, which reflected the need to put people at the centre of such migration, was crucial. That approach, based on the premise that well-planned and voluntary resettlement could reduce poverty, diversify and increase incomes and reduce further vulnerability to climate change impacts, was the one taken by Fiji. Waiting for migration to become necessary before planning for it inevitably resulted in increased vulnerability and inequality. Planned migration could also lead to a greater chance of successful integration for migrants. It could create new livelihoods and opportunities, facilitate the development of new technology and skills and strengthen cultural and social knowledge. It could transform communities by introducing new patterns of consultation, for instance with women and children. It could make persons with disabilities more visible and lead to greater diversity in sources of income.

33. Continuing to draw on the case of Fiji, the Ambassador noted that, in accordance with draft relocation guidelines that drew heavily on the Guiding Principles and prioritized community consent, a participatory approach to consultation and community empowerment, 63 local communities would need to consider relocation in the near future. In conclusion, she highlighted the need to develop national policies and mechanisms to address climate-induced migration and displacement internally and to guide the current and future movement of populations. Such policies must reflect the necessary interconnectivity of the Sustainable Development Goals, human rights and climate policy.

#### **IV. Summary of the discussion**

34. During the ensuing discussion, contributions were made by representatives of Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Botswana, China, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, the European Union, Iraq, Ireland, Kuwait, Lesotho, Norway, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Togo (on behalf of the Group of African States), Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the League of Arab States), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). In addition, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, the United Nations Development Programme, an internally displaced person from Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria and five NGOs took part in the discussion.

35. Overwhelmingly, delegations expressed concern about the magnitude of internal displacement worldwide and about the lack of durable solutions for internally displaced persons, which was leading to growing numbers of such persons living in protracted displacement. In that context, many delegations noted that the Guiding Principles had played a critical role in highlighting the plight of internally displaced persons for the past 20 years and stressed their continued relevance in addressing internal displacement from a human rights perspective. Several delegations welcomed the holding of the panel discussion on internally displaced persons in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Guiding Principles in the Human Rights Council as an excellent and timely opportunity to reaffirm the rights of internally displaced persons and the fundamental role of the Guiding Principles in preventing, responding to and finding durable solutions for internal displacement.

##### **A. Addressing internal displacement: a national responsibility**

36. Several delegations, including those of Armenia, Botswana, China, Denmark, the European Union, Lesotho, Togo (on behalf of the Group of African States), Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the League of Arab States), stressed that first and foremost, national authorities had the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.



Denmark noted that national leadership and ownership were needed if the situation of internally displaced persons was to be addressed successfully.

37. While acknowledging that the primary responsibility for addressing internal displacement lay with national authorities, several speakers also stressed that preventing displacement and protecting and assisting internally displaced persons, including by providing support for durable solutions, was a daunting responsibility that could be achieved only through joint efforts. Many delegations emphasized the need to foster partnerships at the international and regional levels and noted the important and complementary role played by the international community in supporting States affected by internal displacement.

38. The important role of national human rights institutions and civil society organizations in addressing internal displacement was also highlighted. The Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions stressed that as independent institutions with broad human rights mandate and functions, national human rights institutions could make unique and critical contributions to the protection and promotion of the rights of internally displaced persons. The Alliance shared examples of good practices in Afghanistan, Colombia, Nigeria and Ukraine, where national human rights institutions had been carrying out activities such as monitoring and reporting on the situation of internally displaced persons, with specific attention paid to the groups most at risk, such as women and girls, older persons, persons with disabilities and minorities. Other examples of the good practices engaged in by national human rights institutions had included advising the authorities on amendments to laws, regulations and administrative practices or on the development of new legislation compliant with international standards, conducting training, including for law enforcement officials and the internally displaced themselves, and offering legal aid to internally displaced persons. The European Union also emphasized that civil society and volunteer organizations were often at the forefront of national responses to internal displacement and that galvanizing their engagement in the implementation of the Guiding Principles was of paramount importance.

39. Ensuring the participation of internally displaced persons and paying attention to the needs of host communities were referred to as keys to addressing internal displacement by the delegations of Colombia, Denmark the European Union and by the panellists. Delegations noted that the Guiding Principles restated the right of internally displaced persons to participate in programmes and decision-making affecting them and that meaningful participation went beyond consultation, consent and information-sharing to include the internally displaced in the actual design and implementation of programmes.

## **B. Internal displacement in international processes: gaps and opportunities**

40. Some delegations, including those of Austria, Ireland and Switzerland, noted that the international community had recently begun to take serious steps to address large-scale cross-border movements, particularly with the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016 and the ongoing work on the global compacts, which were to be finalized in 2018. However, those delegations noted that internally displaced persons had been left out of those agendas, and the delegation of Ireland stated that it was time to recognize that the internally displaced deserved the same level of attention, given that the factors that had obliged people to move internally were in most cases the same as those that obliged people to seek refuge in other countries. Delegations emphasized that the international community needed to step up to the challenge of addressing the issue of internal displacement with the same energy that it was putting into addressing cross-border movements.

41. Norway stressed that the persistence of internal displacement represented a major international challenge to the common commitments of United Nations Member States, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in particular. Internally displaced persons were often among the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations. Some delegations, including those of Colombia, Norway and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the

panellists noted that if the international community was serious about leaving no one behind, internally displaced persons and their host communities should be a top priority. Denmark noted that the needs and challenges related to internally displaced persons should be reflected as a cross-cutting objective in local and national development plans so as to ensure a whole-of-society approach and the sustained engagement of development actors in support of humanitarian efforts to address the plight of internally displaced persons.

42. Many delegations stressed that the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles represented an opportunity to turn much-needed international attention to the plight of the internally displaced and that the international community must seize the moment to make real progress towards improving outcomes for internally displaced persons. In that context, several delegates, including those representing Austria, Norway, Switzerland, Togo (on behalf of the Group of African States), Tunisia and the United Kingdom, welcomed the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018–2020 and saw it as an opportunity to help the international community move the agenda on internal displacement forward.

### **C. Addressing root causes and all causes of displacement**

43. Many delegations expressed concern about the increasingly protracted nature of displacement and the lack of durable solutions for the internally displaced. Some delegations stressed the need to focus on solutions from the very onset, while others, including those of China, Togo (on behalf of the Group of African States), Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates (on behalf of the League of Arab States), emphasized the need to tackle the root causes of internal displacement.

44. A number of delegations also noted with concern the growing number of persons internally displaced by disasters. In 2017, over 60 per cent of new internal displacements worldwide had been triggered by disasters. It was also noted that the adverse impact of climate change was only likely to aggravate that trend. Persons internally displaced by disasters should not be forgotten in the ongoing discussions on displacement, including cross-border displacement.

## **V. Conclusions**

45. **The panel discussion provided an important opportunity to take stock of achievements and challenges since the presentation of the Guiding Principles to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998. The Guiding Principles were the cornerstone for the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons. The panel discussion also provided an opportunity to reflect on the momentum generated by the twentieth anniversary, on the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018–2020 and on the way forward.**

46. **During the panel discussion, the consensus was that international norms and standards existed and were more relevant than ever. However, there were also many challenges in respect of successfully protecting the rights and meeting the needs of internally displaced persons, including with regard to data collection and the national leadership that would make it possible to turn commitments into actionable laws and policies and ensure that they were implemented.**

47. **Experiences shared during the panel discussion highlighted the need for close collaboration and coordination among all actors at the national level, such as government agencies, national human rights institutions, civil society and humanitarian and development actors.**

48. **The need for a holistic approach to internal displacement, an approach that was based on human rights, tackled root causes and sought to bridge gaps among humanitarian, peace and development actors, was stressed by many participants. The need for States to make strong commitments to internally displaced persons with**

respect to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so that no one was left behind, was also highlighted.

49. Context-specific, inclusive and representative participation of internally displaced persons at all stages of displacement, from prevention to durable solutions, was identified as a cardinal precondition for successful action.

50. The complexity of the current internal displacement landscape required a comprehensive response if the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all internally displaced persons were to be upheld and protected. In her conclusions, the moderator reiterated that the Plan of Action for Advancing Prevention, Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2018–2020 was a timely opportunity and a forum for working more collaboratively and effectively with the common goal of reducing and resolving internal displacement, in line with the Guiding Principles, by advancing prevention, protection and durable solutions for internally displaced persons.

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