

The Honorable António Guterres  
United Nations Secretary-General  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017

October 13, 2021

Dear Secretary-General Guterres,

We write to you to express our strong support for the recommendations delivered to you in the report of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement. We urge that immediate action be taken in implementing those that are clearly within the purview of the Secretary-General to ensure the vision behind the Panel's work is realized and to ensure better outcomes for the internally displaced around the world.

In many countries, our organizations deliver assistance, while advocating for the rights of displaced people in all their diversity and the inclusion of their voices in decision making processes. We have long recognized that efforts to address both the causes and consequences of displacement have been inadequate. Too little attention has been placed on the obligation of states to respond to internally displaced people (IDPs) as citizens, with rights which must be upheld, in addition to prevention of displacement and pursuing the right types of policy and program interventions necessary to ensure it does not become protracted. Responses have also been unable to address compounding discrimination based on age, gender and diversity (AGD). Furthermore, a sustained focus on IDPs consistently falls through the institutional cracks between the humanitarian and development systems, with insufficient political attention to ensure accountability for protecting and assisting them at the national, regional and international levels. As a result, a record 55 million people were displaced at the end of 2020, with little or no prospect for protection and solutions.

For these reasons, we strongly supported the creation of the Panel and advocated that its mandate be extended to allow the successful completion of its work during the COVID-19 pandemic. We feel that bold moves are required to prevent the systemic failures we have repeatedly witnessed in ensuring the rights of the internally displaced are protected and realized and that they are adequately assisted. Based on our experience, we provided significant input during the Panel's deliberations, encouraging recommendations that would close these gaps and usher forward an era of a more coherent, dynamic and adequate global response.

Several of these recommendations will depend on your leadership to mobilize political will and support for their timely and deliberate execution. We therefore urge you to take steps forward to immediately implement the following:

- Appoint a Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) on Solutions to Internal Displacement: A dedicated high-level position is required to pursue solutions to displacement with Members States and ensure sustained focus on displacement across humanitarian, development and peace actors in the UN system. NGOs are ready to engage in a dialogue on how we can support the role of the SRSG.

- Outline the responsibility for internal displacement across the UN system: A clear message should be sent to all relevant UN agencies, setting expectations on their respective role in preventing and implementing solutions to displacement and requiring agency plans be devised toward that goal. This is particularly important in regard to development actors pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Set responsibility for Resident Coordinators (RC) on leadership for solutions: The newly empowered RCs should have the formal responsibility for leading UN efforts toward solutions in each affected country. This should include instituting mechanisms to coordinate actors across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sectors to develop solutions strategies with costed plans and ensure solutions are embedded in Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
- Commission an independent review of the Humanitarian System in contexts of internal displacement: An outside assessment of the functioning of the international humanitarian system should be conducted and recommendations for an improved and more predictable response by the IASC to situations of internal displacement provided. In particular, the review should note that the response must adopt an AGD approach.
- Prioritize sustained focus on displacement and follow through on solutions: Dedicated focus over several years will be required to make sure the vision behind the Panel's report becomes a reality. This should include a suite of actions beyond those outlined above, including commissioning an annual "State of Solutions" report to ensure progress is tracked and lessons learned. A small unit within the Secretary General's office should be created to coordinate and backstop these efforts and ensure the momentum around solutions to internal displacement continues.

The work of the Panel and the recommendations presented to you represent a significant undertaking in advancing efforts to improve the global approach to prevention of and solutions to internal displacement. However, we recognize they represent the very first step toward real change to the status quo. We also recognize our collective responsibility to generate real change, but believe you are best placed to provide the initial impetus to fully implement the Panel's recommendations and maintain constructive momentum.

To ensure the Panel's efforts do not simply become a report and that the vision behind it becomes reality, NGOs stand ready to work toward the implementation of the recommendations at every level, including with IDPs themselves. This will include supporting and advocating for the engagement of other stakeholders, primarily States, and pushing the envelope on critical issues such as predictable resourcing to catalyze action on solutions. We look forward to partnering with you in taking concrete and expeditious steps forward to ensure the rights of internally displaced people are respected and that solutions are proactively and tirelessly pursued.

Thank you for your efforts on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

