

**High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges:
Understanding and addressing root causes of displacement**
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***Thematic Session 1:
Understanding the causes of conflict-related displacement,
the potential of humanitarian action and the drivers of onward movement***

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Co-Chairs' Summary

1. Understanding the root causes of conflict-related displacement

- States and other relevant actors are urged to identify the drivers and triggers of conflict-related displacement as early as possible to prevent and/or mitigate the potentially harmful consequences of forced displacement. Early warning systems in Europe and Africa have been successful in developing resilience to conflict and displacement where the modalities of engagement understand the contextual realities and dynamics on the ground. It is equally important to align the political, humanitarian and operational aspects of any preventative action. By way of example the function of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities has proven effective to identify and mitigate tensions which may lead to conflict and displacement.
- Conflict-induced displacement is often complicated due to a multitude of factors. These include geopolitics, globalization, terrorism and organized crime, as well as the individual challenges of States, such as poverty and a weak rule of law. The modern conduct of hostilities, including the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, is a significant driver of civilian displacement, and causes massive destruction to infrastructure and access to basic services, as witnessed in the Syrian Arab Republic, Eastern Ukraine and Yemen. Important initiatives to counter that, therefore, need to be reinforced.
- The absence of rule of law is a key cause of conflict and displacement. Measures to develop the rule of law should factor in both the emergency, and the longer-term response to displacement. In addition to the immediate humanitarian response, recourse to justice and security measures, notably community policing, should be maintained during the period of tensions or conflict to reduce any additional displacement. In this respect, by way of example, following the disbanding of local police amid rising racial tensions in the Central African Republic, UNDP immediately vetted and financed replacement law enforcement to ensure the continued security and support of the local population.
- There are also less visible causes of conflict-related displacement, including demographic changes, rapid economic growth that is not inclusive, environmental degradation, forced movement of pastoralists, corruption and low-level communal tensions. Some less visible causes of displacement may be generated by the demands of commercial interests and the extractive industries, coupled with weak governance and regulation. These should be addressed through broader development initiatives and the strengthening of national institutions to prevent the causes leading to displacement and refugee situations.

- Conflict prevention activities should also not cease when a conflict ends. Every fragile country is on the spectrum of prevention, preventing fresh conflicts, embedded conflicts, recurrent conflicts, imbedded conflicts. The international community should remain engaged throughout. Context-specific post-conflict demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programmes are critical to ensuring that the movement of small arms to the next place of attraction does not fuel the escalation or resurgence of conflicts elsewhere.

The potential of humanitarian action

- A deep knowledge of what drives and triggers displacement is essential to informing a successful response to it. That response must look inward. It should work with local culture, traditions and justice systems. Humanitarian actors who work on the ground, in field and border locations, and are familiar with local dynamics, are well-placed to inform this response.
- In this respect, the gender dimensions of displacement should be recognized, and the fundamental role of women in the political process should be mainstreamed within all responses to prevent and mitigate conflict-related displacement, in view of their significant influence on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. By way of example, the University of Juba has developed a new initiative to empower women across South Sudan to be leaders in these processes.
- A large burden falls upon humanitarian actors to respond to crises in the absence of rule of law. That gap fosters impunity that, in turn, perpetuates displacement. The absence of rule of law demands an immediate humanitarian response, which is included in the responses of the humanitarian actors, and which must be locally owned by the affected population.
- Humanitarian actors are urged to partner or collaborate with regional, developmental and financial institutions seeking to address state fragility, root causes of conflict and displacement, including in the delivery of training and the development of tools. By way of example the OSCE Protection Checklist was developed through collaboration with UNHCR, ICRC and the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons to ensure that protection is delivered to displaced persons in a timely manner.
- It was noted that the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly is responsible for consideration of legal questions, including matters relating to the rule of law. In view of the fact that rule of law relates to issues beyond justice and courts, including the right to property and the right to return to one's own country, it was recommended that rule of law be more appropriately considered by the Third Committee, which is responsible for social, humanitarian affairs and human rights issues.
- The international community has recognized that sexual violence in armed conflict is a significant driver of displacement. However, the operational response to this driver still needs to be designed and implemented in a manner that will not only protect survivors but also prevent displacement.
- We must find a way to enable civil society and humanitarian actors with ground-level knowledge of the drivers of displacement to share this knowledge to the UN Secretariat, UNSC, DPA and DPKO in a manner that contributes to conflict prevention. Humanitarian actors should collect, monitor and analyse information relating to conflict prevention and protection response and take advantage of their local presence, relationships and knowledge.
- Education, both formal and informal, must feature in an emergency response to conflict and displacement. Education on respect for diversity and peaceful values fosters understanding and can prevent ideologically-based conflict for generations to come. In this respect, the pastoral care role of religious and community based leaders, as well as inter-faith dialogue, should be encouraged.

- A dearth of funding for prevention activities must be remedied. The success of conflict and displacement prevention is dependent on the availability of funds to address the urgent and immediate humanitarian, protection and security responses, as well as the longer term development activities.

2. The drivers of onward movement

- Displacement can happen multiple times, and it is important to focus not only on the immediate causes of displacement but also the causes of secondary or tertiary displacement.
- The triggers of onward movement are complex and varied. These reasons may be the same reasons for initial flight. A person may find that they are unsafe in the country in which they seek protection. They may be unable to gain access to asylum and to benefit from the observance of the rule of law. They may lack basic subsistence or move on to improve their economic situation.
- Effective responses to onward movement require a wider perspective informed by international law, practicality and international cooperation. Unilateral attempts to address onward movement may undermine the international protection regime and perpetuate the cycle of displacement at increased risk to those moving.
- Cooperation is especially critical in order to build the protection capacity of those States, which, for reasons outside their control, struggle to provide it to displaced persons. Ensuring that the responses of humanitarian actors, financial and development institutions are inclusive of those displaced will reduce the factors that drive onward movement.
- Well-founded fear is a driver of displacement. Despair also generates onward movement. The psychological needs of those on the move must therefore inform responses to immediate, secondary or tertiary displacement.
