



UNHCR and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS MEETING 2021

Plenary Discussion

Tuesday 14 and Wednesday 15 December 2021

Statement by Prof. Walter Kaelin, Envoy of the Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD)

Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Chair of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, the Government of Fiji, let me thank you for inviting the PDD to take the floor. I deliver this statement in my capacity as Envoy of the Chair of the PDD.

The PDD is a State-led initiative working towards better protection for people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change as well as more effective prevention of such displacement. One of our strategic priorities is to support the implementation of global protection frameworks, including the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

The adverse effects of climate change are one of the defining challenges of our time. Let me congratulate UNHCR for developing the Strategic Framework for Climate Action, and in particular its focus on law and policy under Action Pillar I. We stand ready to continue working with UNHCR to promote global policies and advance normative frameworks relevant for disaster-displaced persons, and to support States in the application of existing international and domestic tools and standards in this area.

Disaster displacement across international borders will not usually fall within the scope of the application of international or regional refugee protection instruments. At the same time, we agree with UNHCR that people in such contexts may have valid claims for refugee status in certain circumstances. Furthermore, as highlighted by paragraph 63 of the GCR, there are a number of humanitarian protection mechanisms and tools which States can use in such situations. We encourage everyone to use this High-Level Officials Meeting to pledge commitment in this regard.

Let me highlight some practices and opportunities that we have been supporting in the last couple of years and pledge to continue to support through joint efforts with UNHCR and other partners. They include:

- Implementing existing guidelines and commitments relevant to protecting and assisting people displaced in climate change and disaster contexts, both from the perspective of international protection as outlined in UNHCR's 2020 *Legal*

considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, and on the basis of human rights and humanitarian principles, as for example enshrined in the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations, signed by UNHCR;

- Promoting the use of policy tools and guidelines for admission and stay in the context of climate change and disasters, including through simulation exercises, trainings, regional frameworks and strengthened linkages with relevant work under the Global Compact for Migration.
- Supporting ratification endorsement and implementation of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region, in particular Article 16 on facilitating the movement of persons displaced by disasters;
- Supporting the development of a regional human mobility framework and/or guide on admission and stay in climate change and disaster contexts in the Pacific.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. We look forward to further strengthening our cooperation with UNHCR and wish you every success as the High-Level Officials Meeting continues.

End./