



Presentation of Panel's Report to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres,

29 September 2021

Transcript of Secretary-General's Remarks

Part One: Opening Remarks

First of all, I want to thank all the members of the Panel very much; you have done extraordinary work in very difficult circumstances because of COVID-19 not allowing this panel to work as normally as panels work. I'm deeply grateful to all members of the Panel and in particular, grateful to Federica Mogherini and Donald Kaberuka for the way they were able to steer the group with all these difficulties coming from COVID-19, and the other problems of a group of people that need to work together and discuss, exchange ideas, having to do it in these very difficult circumstances. Indeed, the results of the work of the Panel are remarkable and show not only the quality of the members of the panel but also the excellency of the leadership of the two Co-chairs.

Part Two: Responding to the Moderator

First of all, you just said the number of people internally displaced in the world is huge and growing. Contrary to what we have in relation to the refugees, and I have been dealing with refugees for 10 years when I was High-Commissioner, independently about that, works in the context of civil society, refugees have an international law that protects them, and there is a specific UN agency whose responsibility is the protection, assistance, and the solutions

for refugees. So, they benefit from international law and they have an institution whose objective is to make sure that the law is respected; and not only the law is respected, but the number of other aspects related to their life, protection, assistance and solutions, I insist on solutions, is taken care of. Now the situation of internally displaced people is much more complex because they are within the borders of their own country. There is no international legislation related to them. There are some guiding principles that were approved at a certain moment but they're essentially guiding principles more probably for the use of the agencies, unfortunately less taken into account by countries many times. Then obviously, these are the authorities of the governments of the country or sometimes under the authority – if “authority” is the right word – of the groups that control parts of the territory where they are. I mean, we have people internally displaced in Idlib and the people internally displaced in Idlib is not under the Syrian government authority, they are under a number of entities, all kinds of groups that control that area of the territory and the same with many other situations around the world. In most situations, especially when we are dealing with conflict and we are dealing with very fragile states, in most situations, the authorities that deal with the problems of internally displaced are part of the problem instead of being part of the solution and many of the aspects of dramatic violations of human rights are there. It is not common to have governments fully able to integrate internally displaced people into the political systems and electoral mechanisms, effectively working into the development strategies and into a vision of solutions for the people. I mean, sometimes they even use it as an instrument for advocacy for money outside or things of that sort, but really I mean, the integration of internally displaced people in the power systems and the political systems is extremely fragile and the voice of internally displaced people is extremely fragile. On the other hand, the organization of the international community to deal with internal displacement is extremely fragmented. Of course, country teams have internal displacement always as one of the priorities of their action. There is a number of mechanisms of coordination that are working but it is clear that we are far from having in relation to internally displaced people the set of strategies, policies, and measures that will allow for their effective empowerment, and this is a

question of empowerment, I mean that effective empowerment to make sure that their rights are respected and to make sure that their problems and solutions and discussion about solutions are extremely important. Because traditionally when we talk about refugees, we say that the best solution is the return to the country of origin and this perspective to a certain extent was translated into the problems of internal displacement. For people in many countries, they say the best solution is for them to be able to go back to the areas of origin and the truth is that it is not always possible and that is not even always desirable. We are witnessing internal displacement linked to phenomenal urbanization namely in the African continent and many other parts of the world. Colombia is another example, and it is not obvious that people want to go back. We have seen it in Darfur, I mean, we have internally displacement camps that became new cities and governments should be dealing with them in that perspective and usually governments neglect those camps. They consider them as a temporary thing. They don't plan on the possibility of urbanization as one of the tools of solving the problem of internal displacement and they insist on programs of return and investment in the areas of origin that sometimes are completely, I would say, irrelevant because things have changed. There is no way people will be able to go back. Young people won't go back in any way. So, we have a group of population that is huge, that has dramatic problems, whose rights are very difficult to make them effectively recognized, who have little influence in political decisions in the countries or with the groups they have to deal with and then there is no clarity in the majority of situations of effective solutions strategy. And that was the reason why we felt that it would be necessary to take profit of the competence, knowledge, experience and wisdom of a group of people that we trust and to ask them to think about this and come with your suggestions, your proposals, your ideas, your analysis in order to be able to re-think and redesign our strategy, our policies, and in some aspects, our institutional mechanisms to deal with internal displacement. I am very grateful for the report produced and I'm extremely grateful for the efforts made by all the members of the Panel in these very difficult circumstances.

Part Three: Upon Receiving the Report

I think this Panel managed to do a very adequate analysis of the drivers of displacement of the situation of displaced people and the ways to address their situation and to solve their problems. So, it is a comprehensive report that will help us in all areas. I think a key concept here is that internally displaced people are citizens and as citizens, they have rights, they have exactly the same rights as any other citizens of the country. The principle of national ownership which means that States have the responsibility to address their plight as citizens with rights and not as I would say, with a simple existential perspective. I mean, they need protection, they need assistance, but they need solutions, and the responsibility of those namely where states structures function, the responsibility is to address these three aspects with the perspective of citizenship and a human rights minded approach. Assistance in what they need, protection in relation to all the risks that they face and all the violations of human rights that they can suffer, and find a way to fully integrate them into the perspectives of development of the country and in the political system of the country. Now the other thing that I believe is very important is the recognition by the Panel that we do not have enough mechanisms, institutional mechanisms, to allow for an effective coordination of the efforts in relation to internal displacements. We have of course the different structures that exist, that deal with problems in general in countries, but there are not institutional mechanisms able to be more effective in dealing with the situations. So now it is time for us to work. I mean, I intend to, and this is very much linked also to our Common Agenda through the perspectives of our common agenda that are human rights-based approach. I intend now to gather the UN system to look into the recommendations, recommendations on strategy, recommendations on policy and recommendations on institutions, and to make sure that we move ahead as much as possible in the sense that all the objectives that you have been underlined can be matched exactly with the same solutions with some adjustments in some cases, but taking into account the situation of the system and its capacity, but we will take very seriously all these proposals. I think they point in the right direction and now it is our time to get to work and we are very happy with your offer to go on supporting us.

Thank you so very much again, it is a fantastic work and this work will be our guiding instrument to make sure that we are able to change what needs to be changed, in order for the people to have their rights fully recognized and their integration in the political, economic and social systems of their countries fully met, and a solution for their plight found that is not just a chimeric solution, but it is based on the development strategies of the countries, the urbanization process of the countries and adapting those solutions to the changes that the countries themselves are facing in the post-conflict situation or the post-disaster situation. The most difficult aspects, of course, will be in those areas where people are under the control of non-state actors and this will be the most challenging situation and we will have to look very specifically on how to improve the way we are working because what we are doing is absolutely not enough, but again this is an area in which your contribution has been extremely important. So, thank you very much, you've done a fantastic work, now it is our time to correspond to that fantastic work to make things move in the right direction. Thank you very much.

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