**Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs**

**Call for inputs**

**UN-Habitat's contribution**

Link to the call for inputs: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2023/call-input-thematic-priorities-special-rapporteur-human-rights-internally>

**Themes:**

* Climate change and internal displacement
* Internal displacement due to generalized violence, including the role of criminal violence
* Internally displaced persons and peace negotiations, mediation and peace processes, and peacebuilding
* Sustainable integration and/or reintegration into the communities in which they settle or return to.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) recognizes the growing challenge of internal displacement, a phenomenon increasingly urban in nature. As the agency mandated to promote sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat is committed to addressing the needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda and the UN-Habitat Institutional Plan for the operationalization of the SG’s Action Agenda on internal displacement.

**Climate Change and Internal Displacement**

Climate change, a critical driver of internal displacement, exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups. UN-Habitat's Institutional Plan recognizes the strong linkages between internal displacement, climate change, urbanization, and fragility. It emphasizes the need for climate adaptation measures and comprehensive policies addressing climate-induced displacement.

Urban areas have become the safety valves to absorb the large numbers of people displaced by climate, conflict and poverty. As climate-induced displacement is expected to grow exponentially, it is important that urban centres become better suited at accommodating such inflows, without aggravating the conditions of the host communities. Concurrently, urban areas are becoming the theatre of converging crises, including the climate and biodiversity emergencies, increasing the vulnerabilities of urban dwellers, especially in informal areas. It is then key to ensure that mayors and local governments are empowered as first responders to crisis, to take charge of response, recovery and transformation towards a better urban future.

UN-Habitat's mandate to promote resilient cities is particularly relevant in this context. Resilient cities are better equipped to mitigate and adapt to climate change, reducing the risk of displacement and ensuring that displaced people hosted in cities are in a safe place. UN-Habitat advocates for the integration of climate change adaptation strategies into national policies, ensuring they are inclusive and address the specific needs of displaced populations.

[Reply to Q1 & Q4] Recent research undertaken by UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network highlights that increasing inequalities, poor governance of urban and rural lands (e.g. privatizations, acquisition of valuable lands by large multinational companies, mass evictions, etc.) and climate change (particularly fresh water scarcity, land degradation, desertification and reduced agricultural productivity) have different manifestations but concur to aggravate displacement and migration. Climate-induced displacement needs to be mitigated through interdisciplinary approaches that enhance human security, put in place robust social protection policies and protect ecosystems at the same time. Improving the governance of land to the benefit of all people and ecosystem is a key priority (see decisions at COP 15 of 2022, FAO, UNCCD and also UN-Habitat / GLTN). Sustainable land use practices need to be put in place, for climate adaptation and risk mitigation.

[Reply to Q2] Most affected populations are those that are facing the climate crisis from a position of pre-existing vulnerability. The more layers of vulnerability there are, the more vulnerable people are. Key vulnerabilities: marginalised communities (e.g. for ethnic, religious, or political reasons); people without land tenure security (e.g. informal urban settlements and unrecorded rural areas); the stateless and those without legal personal documentation; those living in countries without / with weak rule of law; the poor; the women (particularly those living in contexts with a large gender gap and in conflict-affected countries).

[Reply to Q3] To adequately frame the internal displacement and climate nexus, the SR would need to adopt a multidisciplinary lens, where human rights, peace/stability and development considerations are overlayed. Root causes of climate-induced displacement are often found in power / decision making inequalities and inequal access to economic resources aggravated by the climate crisis. Such complexities should be articulated in the report.

**Generalized Violence and Internal Displacement**

Generalized violence, including criminal violence, is a significant driver of internal displacement. UN-Habitat's approach to this issue is rooted in its commitment to inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11.

UN-Habitat recognizes the need for effective protection measures for displaced persons and comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of violence. It advocates for the implementation of targeted protection measures for specific groups, such as women and children, who are often disproportionately affected by generalized violence.

[Reply to Q7] Common drivers of violence and human rights violations resulting in displacement encountered by UN-Habitat include the destruction of houses, entire neighbourhoods and forced evictions aiming at changing the demography of the territories and at confiscating houses, land and properties for economic benefit and for financing warfare.

[Reply to Q9] About half of the countries’ wealth is held into its real estate, land and natural resources. The control of natural resources (incl. minerals), agricultural and pastoral lands, and valuable urban land and houses are therefore at the heart of the competition that results into violence, conflicts and displacement. UN-Habitat promotes the prevention of violence and displacement through improving security of tenure over land and housing and enhancing land administration and land governance policies. When people have legal recognition of their rights over their home, businesses, agricultural or pastoral land, the incentives for dispossession, eviction, and illegal sale reduce. The work that UN-Habitat is doing in documenting and registering the housing, land and property rights of displaced people in several countries, and the subsequent support in the rehabilitation of buildings and restitution of properties, reduces the incentives for forced evictions as a mean to acquire wealth.

**Internally Displaced Persons in Peace Negotiations and Peacebuilding**

The exclusion of IDPs from peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes can undermine the sustainability of peace agreements and perpetuate displacement. UN-Habitat, with its focus on inclusive urban development, advocates for the meaningful participation of displaced persons in these processes.

UN-Habitat advocates for the inclusion of women, including displaced women, in peace processes, peace negotiations and reconstruction mechanisms. Women’s participation is proven a key avenue to improve the likelihood of peace agreements to be implemented and the negotiated peace to hold.

The technical aspects of peace agreements need to be better understood by the actors brokering the peace agreements; often issues related to land and housing rights of displaced populations and other affected communities are not sufficiently researched and are not adequately presented in the negotiated documents, and this undermines implementation (e.g. land management and the role of customary authorities in Darfur, Sudan).

UN-Habitat's Institutional Plan commits to strengthening its contribution to solutions to internal displacement at the country level. It aims to take up coordination roles in countries where it has an office in place and where the solutions agenda has a strong urban or territorial dimension. It also commits to contributing to national pathways to solutions at scale in priority countries, mobilizing relevant Ministries and local governments to ensure a territorial approach to internal displacement.

**Integration or Reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons**

The integration or reintegration of IDPs into host communities or areas of return is often hindered by various challenges, including discrimination, lack of access to basic services, and livelihood opportunities, and unresolved land and property issues.

UN-Habitat's mandate to promote inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities is particularly relevant in this context. It commits to further expanding its own work on solutions to internal displacement in a collaborative manner, at the global level and in countries where it has a presence. It also commits to creating a standby capacity to support UN-Habitat country offices and UN Country Team/UN agencies through integrated urban development/solutions support.

[Q19] Increasingly, people are displaced into urban centres. The urbanisation of displacement often overlaps with rural-to urban migration and urban poverty; an area-based approach is therefore recommended.

It is of vital importance that IDPs have access to adequate housing and land tenure security over agricultural commercial and other income generating properties. This can be achieved by ensuring that no discriminatory legislation, administrative regulations, or practices are in place to prevent IDPs from owning or renting properties. The barriers that prevent IDPs from legally renting or using housing, land and properties should be removed; this includes ensuring they have access to personal documentation. Strengthening the secondary land and property rights of IDPs will not be possible without recognising, strengthening, and recording the rights of host communities (at the individual or at the community level). Often land and property administration and land registration are not functional in fragile, developing and conflict affected countries. Host communities live in informality or in areas managed customarily without adequate legal recognition of customary rights. This negatively affects the displaced, the host communities, the migrants, the poor and the youth.

**Conclusion**

UN-Habitat's strategic approach to internal displacement is rooted in its mandate to promote sustainable urban development. It recognizes the urban nature of internal displacement and the role of cities and local governments in providing solutions. It commits to strengthening its capacities and engagements to address internal displacement, and to working collaboratively with other UN actors and partners to advance solutions at the global and country levels. This approach aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of a better urban future for all.

UN-Habitat's commitment to addressing internal displacement is reflected in its Institutional Plan, which outlines a comprehensive approach to this issue. The plan is built around three pillars: Data, knowledge and advocacy; Normative work; and Operations. These pillars aim to fill significant data, analysis, and capacity gaps, lead on the production of appropriate tools and guidance for assessments, risk analyses, and development of sustainable solutions to end displacement, and address internal displacement at the country level.

In terms of climate change and internal displacement, the plan recognizes the strong linkages between internal displacement, climate change, urbanization, and fragility. It encourages MSs to further explore the contribution of urban crisis prevention and response to climate action, durable solutions for displaced persons, sustaining peace, and the acceleration of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Regarding generalized violence and internal displacement, the plan commits to strengthening its contribution to solutions to internal displacement at the country level. It aims to take up coordination roles in countries where it has an office in place and where the solutions agenda has a strong urban or territorial dimension. It also commits to contributing to national pathways to solutions at scale in priority countries, mobilizing relevant Ministries and local governments to ensure a territorial approach to internal displacement and establish dedicated pathways to solutions in towns and cities.

In relation to the integration or reintegration of IDPs, the plan commits to further expanding its own work on solutions to internal displacement in a collaborative manner, at the global level and in countries where it has a presence. It will develop agreements to make its expertise available to other UN actors where it has no ongoing programming. It also commits to creating a standby capacity to support UN-Habitat country offices and UN Country Team/UN agencies through integrated urban development/solutions support.

In terms of IDPs and peace negotiations, the plan recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach that includes humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, human rights, disaster risk reduction, and climate change actors. It commits to strengthening or developing strategic partnerships with these actors to advance the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach in urban internal displacement contexts.

In conclusion, the UN Habitat Institutional Plan provides a comprehensive approach to addressing the issues raised by the Special Rapporteur of Human Rights of IDPs. It recognizes the urban nature of internal displacement and the role of cities and local governments in providing solutions. It commits to strengthening its capacities and engagements to address internal displacement, and to working collaboratively with other UN actors and partners to advance solutions at the global and country levels. This approach aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of a better urban future for all.