



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 41st Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights
of internally displaced persons
Geneva, 28 June 2019

Mr. President,

While the root causes of forced displacement are manifold, there is always one tragic common denominator, namely, that millions of people are fleeing their homes, their livelihoods, and in many cases their families, in search for safety, peace and a life in dignity.

As outlined in the report of the Special Rapporteur, 41.4 million people remained uprooted within their own countries due to conflict, and 28 million new internal displacements were recorded in 2018 alone, including 17.2 million due to natural disasters.¹

Forced displacement is not just a matter of “misfortune”, or wanting more or better in life. More often than not, this phenomenon is fueled by unjust and uncaring policies or ideologies, racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination, systematic violence, or absence of the rule of law. Everyone has a right to remain in his/her home country and to avoid being displaced. Just as in the case of refugees and migrants, the sheer numbers of IDPs may easily be ignored. Yet, it is much harder to escape the human tragedies and the personal stories behind them, as well as the severe humanitarian and socio-economic impact on many communities.

Mr. President,

This Delegation notes with concern that there continue to be far more internally displaced persons (IDPs) by conflict in today’s world. This raises a serious question about the appropriateness of our legal instruments to assure the protection of all persons seeking safety in their own home countries and about the ways to operationalize the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the GP20 Plan of Action. In doing so, it is of paramount importance to be guided by the centrality of the human person: first and foremost, IDPs are human beings with inherent dignity and inalienable rights.

While the primary responsibility to protect and assist IDPs under their jurisdiction lies with the State authorities, the Holy See often has urged shared responsibility to address the root causes of forced displacement. This requires courage and political will; bringing to an end conflicts which breed hatred, violence and revenge; striving for peace and reconciliation, including interreligious dialogue; and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In this regard, this Delegation wishes to recall the role of faith-based organizations, which often are the first providers of assistance to IDPs, including psychological support to overcome the heavy toll of displacement, as well as their spiritual needs.

Mr. President,

¹ Cf. Document A/HRC/41/40, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of internally displaced persons.

The situations of IDPs often represent an “invisible” and hidden phenomenon. Regrettably, in too many instances, the loss of their possessions, as well as personal documentation, leaves them with no other choice than to resort to desperate measures, often falling prey to trafficking, smuggling, sexual exploitation or other forms of abuse.

In this regard, in order to portray a more comprehensive picture of the severity of forced displacement, it is important to encourage the media not to be oblivious to the tragic situations in which IDPs find themselves. This would also help to promote a more effective response on behalf of the international community and allocation of humanitarian aid.

At the same time, we must call attention to the fact that natural disasters and environmental degradation increasingly are among the causes of forced displacement. The adverse impact of climate change and the more frequent occurrence of natural disasters increasingly place serious obstacles on the enjoyment of human rights, especially among rural societies.

Pope Francis often has condemned the “globalization of indifference”, which also concerns environmental deterioration, the depletion of natural resources, land disputes and the utter disregard for our common home, affecting for the most part the poorest and most vulnerable.²

Mr. President,

We cannot allow human tragedies to dictate the pace of our response to forced displacement. It is important to instill a culture of prevention and to strengthen preparedness and early warning systems. In this regard, this Delegation would like to ask the Special Rapporteur if she could share best practices explaining how innovative technologies and social media have helped in preventing and mitigating internal displacement, as well as in raising awareness among communities at risk.

Thank you.

² Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*.