



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 44th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Internally Displaced Persons
Geneva, 9 July 2020

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and its focus on the particular vulnerabilities that people with disabilities face in the context of forced displacement.

Just like migrants and refugees, IDPs are not mere numbers or statistics: they are human persons, with their personal stories, suffering and aspirations. Unfortunately, IDPs have increasingly become victims of the “globalization of indifference” which Pope Francis repeatedly denounced.

Madam President,

This year Pope Francis devoted his Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees to “the drama of internally displaced persons, an often-unseen tragedy that the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated”.¹

Among them, internally displaced persons with disabilities often encounter additional burdens and barriers to accessing specific displacement-related information and humanitarian assistance, resulting in inequalities and heightened protection risks. For these reasons, it is important to consider the diverse needs of IDPs, including those with disabilities so that they may access protection and durable solutions and be fully integrated into society.

In this regard, the Delegation of the Holy See wishes to inform that the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See recently issued a document on “Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People”.²

While this document primarily aims to inspire and encourage the pastoral work of the Catholic Church and its institutions, it also offers broader suggestions and guidance for action based on four principles: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate. Among the various recommendations, this document also advocates for States to offer specialized measures and protection for IDPs with disabilities to ensure that they are safe from harm and foster their full participation in host societies.

Madam President,

¹ Pope Francis, Message for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

² Migrants and Refugee Section, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, “Pastoral Orientations on Internally Displaced People”, available at: <https://migrants-refugees.va/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/1.-Read-On-Screen-A5-EN-.pdf>.

While respecting national sovereignty, there is an urgent need for genuine cooperation within the international community on internal displacement. In this regard, we wish to encourage States to design a clearer system of responsibility for IDPs to ensure effective protection, to achieve durable solutions and, ultimately, to save lives.

Such an approach requires a combination of safety, respect for human dignity and human rights, early warning and prevention. This should include greater mechanisms of coordination and clearer mandates, including the development of a legal instrument and institutional support, founded on the principles that all people, regardless of their migratory status, should be able to remain in their home in peace and security without the threat of being forcibly displaced.

In this regard, partnerships with religious organizations and faith communities could be particularly helpful, as they are often on the frontlines of assisting the forcibly displaced, also providing them with precious psychological and spiritual assistance.

Madam President,

The Holy See wishes to emphasize that as much as they are urgent and essential, international mechanisms and frameworks alone, however, will only be effective when we overcome the prejudices of a culture that continues to produce inequalities and leaves many people behind.

Thank you, Madame President,