



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva at the 86th meeting of the Standing Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – Regional update on the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region
Geneva, 8 March 2023

Mr. Vice-Chair,

It is regrettable that in recent years there has been a constant, worldwide increase in the number of people fleeing their countries of origin because of conflicts, violence, persecution, food insecurity, poverty and, increasingly, climate change. While the intensity and interplay of these causes may vary, there is always a tragic common denominator: millions of people forced to leave their homes, often risking their lives in search for safety, peace and a life of dignity.

In this regard, the Holy See is grateful to those Countries in the region that, in spite of their own difficulties, continue to fulfill their legal obligations to those seeking protection with generosity. Besides the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers, we also note with concern the high number of internally displaced persons, as well as their marginalization. IDPs have the same rights and protections as other citizens. Therefore, all Governments, with the support of the international community, must spare no effort in seeking immediate solutions to their displacement, including through voluntary resettlement schemes and the provision of essential services, like quality healthcare and education.

Mr. Vice-Chair,

At the same time, being displaced should be a temporary emergency situation. It should not become a common, long-term collective experience. Temporary solutions in a time of emergency should make way as soon as possible to the promotion, adoption, and firm implementation of durable solutions, including speedier resettlement of refugees to third countries. In this regard, the response of Countries in close proximity to such crises is only as strong as the unity and effectiveness of the international community as a whole, including in the provision of financial and technical support to first responders and to local communities.

Mr. Vice-Chair,

The number of children displaced because of the devastation caused by violence, floods and food insecurity, is particularly concerning. It is tragic that so many children cannot receive proper education. Many do not even remember what it means to have a home.

There is no room for further delays to achieve durable solutions, especially for these children. As Pope Francis urged in his apostolic journey to South Sudan during a meeting with internally displaced persons last February, “the future cannot lie in refugee camps”.¹ Here, the Holy See wishes to echo Pope Francis’ heartfelt appeal “to end all conflict and to resume the peace process in a serious way, so that violence can end, and people can return to living in dignity. Only with peace, stability and justice can there be development and social reintegration.”²

Thank you.

¹ Address of His Holiness Pope Francis during the meeting with IDPs, Juba, 4 February 2023.

² *Ibid.*