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Commemorating 16 years of the Kampala Convention

Joint Statement by Paula Gaviria Betancur, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons and Selma Sassi Safer, Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, Internally Displaced Persons and Migrants in Africa (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights), and Ruven Menikdiwela, Assistant High Commissioner-Protection, UNHCR.

GENEVA 8 December 2025: On the 16th anniversary of the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), celebrated on 6 December, we commemorate the world's first and only binding, continent-wide landmark treaty representing Africa's commitment and leadership to protecting the dignity, rights, and well-being of Africa's internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Sixteen years later, its vision is more urgent than ever. Across the continent, internal displacement continues to rise. By the end of 2024, the number of displaced people in Africa uprooted by conflict and violence reached 33 million. Millions more were displaced by disasters, whose frequency and intensity are sharply increasing.

We commend the States that have ratified, domesticated and begun implementing national IDP laws aligned with the Convention. However, significant gaps remain. Many States still face challenges related to conflict prevention, climate adaptation, inclusive humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and achieving durable solutions for displaced communities.

We therefore encourage all African Union Member States to: accelerate ratification and domestication of the Kampala Convention; develop and implement national laws, drawing inspiration from the African Union Model Law on Internal Displacement (2018); establish national strategies and coordination mechanisms on internal displacement strategies, and coordination mechanisms on internal displacement; strengthen protection systems for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities and minorities; improve national data systems to better assess IDP needs and guide effective responses, and prioritize durable solutions through safe and voluntary return, local integration, or resettlement with full community participation.

We also call on States to meaningfully and effectively involve displaced persons as active agents of change.

We further invite States Parties to the Kampala Convention to report on its implementation to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in their periodic reports in accordance with Article 14, paragraph 4, of the Convention.

International partners must reinforce government leadership to address internal displacement and step up support for prevention, early warning, peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, and inclusive development to break cycles of displacement.

The Kampala Convention remains a landmark of African solidarity and global human-rights leadership. Its commitments must now translate into concrete action for millions of internally

displaced persons across the continent.

The experts:

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