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States must end escalating conflicts and address the root causes of forced displacement to make progress towards SDGs

GENEVA (15 June 2026) – UN experts have expressed concern that escalating conflicts and record levels of internal displacement are undermining and reversing the progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As displacement becomes increasingly protracted, its impact risk eroding hard-won gains, the experts said ahead of the annual ECOSOC Transition Meeting from Relief to Development taking place on 16 June in New York. They issued the following statement:

"Most of the 82.2 million persons living in internal displacement at the end of 2025 were hosted in low – and middle-income countries. Sustainable development cannot take root where instability persists, and displacement remain unresolved.

With conflict driving more internal displacement than disasters in 2025, there is a need to address the root causes of instability and strengthen the links between the three UN pillars human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security, as reflected in the UN Charter, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Pact for the Future, and the Sevilla Commitment.

Conflict prevention is not only a moral imperative but a development necessity. Conflicts are one of the key disruptors to realising the right to development. Investing in conflict prevention reduces human suffering and is far more cost-effective than responding to the devastating consequences of conflict.

Rather than funding a war economy, States have the opportunity to align efforts to address internal displacement with the SDGs, generating benefits for both displaced communities and local economies.

Conflicts affect pathways to development through loss of lives, destruction of property and infrastructure, gender-based violence, forced displacement, weakening of governance institutions and political instability. Conflict-related displacement disrupts access to education, healthcare, housing, water, sanitation, livelihoods, and the right to promote, protect and defend human rights, creating vulnerabilities that can persist across generations. They also divert scarce resources away from development priorities, slowing progress toward the SDGs.

The destruction of vital civilian infrastructure and restrictions on humanitarian aid to reconstruct it, are actions that drive further displacement, as well as preclude the possibility to return.

Many internally displaced people (IDPs) remain displaced for years or even decades, highlighting the need for durable solutions that extend beyond emergency assistance. Integrating IDPs into national development plans, public services, and economic systems is essential to building resilience and promoting social and economic inclusion.

"A development-oriented approach can unlock opportunities for displaced populations and host communities alike.

States should invest in robust data systems and scale up international cooperation," the experts said. "Partnerships among governments, international organisations, multilateral development banks, and financial institutions are essential to mobilising resources, expanding technical support, and increasing flexible, multi-year funding."

States must systematically integrate internal displacement into SDG implementation and reporting mechanisms, ensuring targeted investments that address both humanitarian and development needs.

States should further elevate attention to internal displacement within relevant UN forums to strengthen recognition of its social development dimensions and promote policies that reduce inequality, prevent exclusion, and support durable solutions.

Addressing internal displacement is not only a humanitarian imperative; it is essential to achieving sustainable development, building resilient societies, and securing lasting peace.

ENDS

The experts:

- ***Paula Gaviria Betancur**, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons*
- ***Surya Deva,** Special Rapporteur on the right to development*
- ***Koldo Casla,** Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing*
- ***Pedro Arrojo-Agudo,** Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation*
- ***Andrea Bolaños Vargas**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders*
- ***Elena Carolina Díaz Galán,** Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.*

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