

**Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
October 2014, Security Council Chamber**

Statement by **Mr. Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons**

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Argentina and the other members of the Security Council for holding this open debate on the critical issue of displaced women and girls in the framework of the women and peace and security agenda. The intersection of peace and security, human rights and development is critical to dealing with the issue of internal displacement. We must not lose sight of the important role that internally displaced women can play in negotiating peace, ensuring their human rights and bringing about development in post-conflict situations.

As part of my mandate, I enter into dialogue with Governments and the international community alike to advise on and advocate for the best possible protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and in all my field missions I pay specific attention to the protection of internally displaced women and girls. This year alone, I have carried out missions to Kenya, Azerbaijan, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and Ukraine. Such field missions are significant in that they provide an early warning system for the international community through the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly and, in this instance, the Security Council itself on the actual causes, conditions and situations of displacement.

My mandate receives specific support from United Nations agencies and entities, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and I am grateful for their support and great collaboration. My work could not be possible without the outstanding support extended by Member States, both those working to cope with and to protect IDPs and those supporting action to improve the lives of internally displaced persons internationally. I am grateful for the ever-growing cooperation extended by States to my mandate. I would also like to highlight the Arria Formula meeting in May on the protection of IDPs, co-chaired by Chile and Argentina, which I had the privilege to address and during which the issue of internal displacement and threats to international peace and security were tackled.

We started 2014 with an unprecedented peak in the number of persons forcibly displaced within their own countries due to armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations -33.3 million internally displaced persons, the highest figure ever recorded. In many countries, IDPs are also displaced by natural disasters, further compounding existing vulnerabilities. Women and girls account for some half of the world's IDP population.

Since the 1990s, greater attention has been paid to the rights and needs of women and girls in emergency and post-conflict situations and to promoting gender-sensitive approaches in humanitarian, development and early recovery response. A wide range of resolutions — for instance, the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) — but also policies, gender-mainstreaming efforts and targeted programmes have been adopted in this regard, and they have increasingly encompassed internally displaced women and girls.

The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which detail the specific rights of internally displaced women and girls, have been recognized by the General Assembly and in Security Council resolutions. The Guiding Principles have informed the inclusion of concrete and progressive provisions on internally displaced women in subsequent instruments, such as the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region and the 2009 African Union Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. In 2013, I dedicated my thematic report to the Human Rights Council to the situation of internally displaced women, and during this debate I would like to draw to the attention of the Security Council to that report.

Despite such positive developments, responses to internal displacement still do not adequately address the specific concerns and roles of women and girls. During situations of conflict and violence, women and girls flee to escape arbitrary killings, rape, torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or starvation. They may have been the victims of such violations themselves or seen their loved ones attacked and abused. The experience of my mandate is that women and girls are targeted as a means of armed conflict -to destroy and humiliate communities, to manipulate the demographic composition of communities, for sexual slavery including enforced concubinage, and at times enforced sterilization. As IDPs, women experience the various human rights challenges that are characteristic to displacement situations and that often place IDPs at greater risk than other affected populations. Such challenges include the loss of livelihoods and key documentation, as well as the lack of effective access to a number of important rights and services.

In addition, internally displaced women often face double discrimination, based on being both an IDP and a woman, and experience human rights challenges due to the intersection of gender with other factors such as age, group affiliation such as minority status, disability and civil or socioeconomic situations. Displaced women often have to assume new gender roles that further expose them to gender-based violence, including physical violence and trafficking. Those roles include being the only breadwinners and taking on the increased burden of care for extended families. Internally displaced women risk their lives, safety and physical integrity to protect their husbands and families. They have told me, “If we let their husbands and male children fetch firewood, food or water, they will be killed, whereas we may be raped but spared death”.

Other specific protection concerns for internally displaced women include inequitable access to assistance and psychosocial support, education, training and livelihoods; poor reproductive health care; and exclusion from decision-making processes. The fact that more IDPs tend to live in urban rather than camp or rural settings also raises additional challenges that have detrimental impacts on women and girls. I first visited Côte d’Ivoire a year after the end of the post-electoral violence. Many IDPs had found refuge in urban areas, including girls who had been impregnated during displacement and could not go back to their communities as a result. However, the inability of IDPs to continue renting their shelters in those urban centres, once the cash grant they received to enable them to stay in urban areas ran out, pushed the most vulnerable communities, including women and girls, to the outskirts of the city. Many displaced women and girls, particularly those belonging to minorities, are at risk of statelessness.

Pre-existing patterns of discrimination in many of those contexts are exacerbated during conflict and contribute to violations of women’s rights to housing, land and property. For instance, during my

visit to Sri Lanka, I was struck by the fact that many IDP women either lacked proper documentation to their land or had documents in the name of their deceased husbands or fathers, preventing them from accessing their land.

To respond to those intricate problems with far-reaching consequences, we need to look at long-term solutions. Displacement is not just a humanitarian issue, but also an issue of building peace, and constitutes a long-term development challenge with profound political, economic, environmental and security implications. If left unaddressed, protracted displacement generates further marginalization, inequality, fragility and vulnerability and erodes women's resilience.

Displacement can overwhelm the institutional capacities of affected States, which are already dealing with major conflicts or disasters. Many States have neither policy frameworks or coordination systems in place to respond to internal displacement, nor a set of procedures to bring quick assistance to populations made extremely vulnerable from one day to another as they have lost livelihoods, social protection and have gone through traumatic experiences. States also lack comprehensive IDP registration systems by age and gender.

More needs to be done if we are to respond adequately to the specific protection concerns of IDP women. Data collection disaggregated by sex, age, location and other key indicators is critical for effective advocacy and the development of programmes to respond to the specific needs of IDP women at all stages of displacement, irrespective of the cause of displacement. National and international efforts to collect, update, analyse and disseminate both quantitative and qualitative data on IDPs, including those outside of camps, displacement-affected communities and communities at risk of displacement should be strengthened.

A more preventive approach to sexual and gender-based violence in the context of internal displacement is also essential. In that regard, gender-sensitive training should be provided more systematically to police and military forces, judiciary personnel and social workers. A stronger focus on prevention is also required within the households and communities of the internally displaced, including engaging men and boys in those prevention and protection efforts. States should take all measures to combat impunity for sexual and gender-based violence, including by investigating and holding perpetrators accountable. Efforts to reduce exposure to sexual violence also entails ensuring that survivors have access to appropriate support, including reproductive health care and psychosocial services.

Ensuring access to justice and accountability mechanisms is key when addressing internal displacement with a gender lens. In addition to promoting access to criminal and civil justice systems for IDP women, it is also essential to consider how their concerns can be addressed through transitional justice measures such as truth and reconciliation commissions and reparations. Donor accountability for gender-equality programming for IDPs is essential and entails more effective integration of gender issues into donor practices.

I was heartened by the resilience of IDP women I met in Ukraine. Many of them were volunteering to help other displaced persons. Meaningful participation by IDP women and girls in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies, programmes and activities that affect their lives at all stages of displacement is key in the response to internal displacement. IDP women, as individuals, have the right to make free and informed decisions

concerning the resolution of their displacement on the basis of adequate and appropriately communicated information, participate fully in building peace and in planning and management of their return, local integration or resettlement elsewhere. The participation and leadership of IDP women in finding durable solutions that address their very specific concerns is critical.

I would like to thank again Argentina for the opportunity to address the Security Council today.