

Remarks of the Director of DIPS, Elizabeth Tan
At 96th meeting of the Standing Committee, 16-18 June 2026
Agenda item 3 – Regional activities and global programmes
Engagement of UNHCR with internally displaced persons
Wed 17 June, approx. 11h00
DIPS Director’s Remark

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues,

I am pleased to brief the Committee today on **UNHCR’s engagement with internally displaced persons**, and on how the Office supports governments and partners to protect rights and advance solutions.

As noted in the Standing Committee paper, this is the first time in a decade that we can report a reduction in the number of internally displaced persons. The figure fell from 73.5 million in 2024 to 64.1 million by the end of 2025, a decrease of 7 per cent. While this is an important development, lower figures do not always mean that returns took place in conditions conducive to safety, dignity and sustainability. In some contexts, protection concerns remain.

At the same time, 2025 was marked by a sudden and sharp decrease in funding. This affected UNHCR’s capacity and, in some contexts, required us to scale back or discontinue critical protection and solutions-oriented activities, including community-based programmes, legal aid and outreach. These reductions have increased the exposure of displaced people to violence, exploitation and other protection risks, and have undermined progress achieved through stronger legal frameworks and field-level protection efforts.

These constraints have required us to prioritise more rigorously and to focus our engagement strategically, in line with UNHCR's global responsibilities for protection and solutions.

UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons is guided by successive United Nations General Assembly resolutions, Inter-Agency Standing Committee accountabilities, and the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement. It is also shaped by UNHCR's Policy on Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement and the Focus Area Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2024–2030. Together, these provide a framework for predictable and prioritised action.

Excellencies,

In 2025, despite funding and staffing cuts, UNHCR supported the provision of **protection, assistance and solutions for internally displaced persons in almost 30 countries** across all regions.

Protecting internally displaced persons requires **strong national legal frameworks and meaningful community participation**. In 2025, as reflected in the paper, there were positive legal developments in countries including Mexico, Colombia and Nigeria.

UNHCR's operational support contributed to concrete protection outcomes in multiple contexts. As the paper illustrates, in countries such as Ukraine, Ethiopia, Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic, UNHCR helped internally displaced persons to access protection counselling, legal documentation, legal assistance, housing and services, as well as housing, land and property support. Across operations, UNHCR also worked closely with communities to strengthen local capacities and address both immediate and longer-term protection risks.

Excellencies,

UNHCR's engagement with internally displaced persons is grounded in **complementarity and partnership**. The Office works with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons and the Protection Expert Group on Internal Displacement to provide technical protection support to governments and other stakeholders. One example is the Cross-Regional Forum on Implementing Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement, which brought together government officials and internally displaced leaders to discuss implementation challenges, including multi-level governance and sub-national responses.

The Office is also strengthening its partnership with internally displaced leaders **to promote meaningful participation**. UNHCR provides secretariat support to the Global Internally Displaced Persons Advisory Group, a consultative body of 12 internally displaced leaders that advises United Nations entities and other stakeholders on efforts to prevent displacement, protect rights and advance solutions. Group members contributed to the Global Refugee Forum Progress Review, the Cross-Regional Forum on the Implementation of Laws and Policies on Internal Displacement, the Global Protection Forum, and the commemoration of the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

Partnership also requires effective humanitarian coordination. UNHCR is actively engaged in the Humanitarian Reset and committed to supporting a simpler, more effective and more locally led system. The Office continues to advance the centrality of protection by promoting collective action to mitigate protection risks. UNHCR's protection analysis capacity remains an important tool for integrating protection considerations across responses. In 2025, the Global Protection Cluster prepared 25 protection analysis updates to inform planning, coordination and decision-making.

As part of the Humanitarian Reset, **UNHCR has led the consolidation of the Global Protection Cluster** and currently leads 21 of 23 country Protection Clusters. Under cluster simplification, the global Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters will merge, with the

addition of the housing, land and property area of responsibility, and will be co-led by IFRC and IOM. UNHCR will remain an important actor within this architecture and will continue to lead or co-lead at country level where it has comparative advantage.

The Office has also continued its engagement with the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement to support internally displaced persons in achieving durable solutions, help prevent new displacement crises, and promote effective protection and assistance for those displaced.

UNHCR serves in the Solutions Champions Group to support Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams in facilitating government-led solutions. The Office also supports and participates in the Global Hub for the Coordination of Solutions to Internal Displacement. This engagement helps to facilitate learning, link country-level priorities with global policy, data and financing, and support implementation in countries such as the Central African Republic, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen.

Excellencies,

UNHCR's budget for engagement in situations of internal displacement in 2026 represents a 23 per cent decrease compared to 2025, in line with the reduction in the organisation's overall budget. Funding available for this work also remains limited. Even within these constraints, the Office remains committed to its engagement with internally displaced persons and to working with States, civil society, national and international humanitarian actors, and internally displaced communities and their hosts to strengthen protection and advance solutions. Going forward, UNHCR will continue to focus its engagement strategically, deepen partnerships, and prioritise action where it can make the greatest contribution to protection and solutions for internally displaced persons.