

**Security Council Open Debate
28 October 2014**

“Women, Peace and Security – Displaced Women and Girls: Leaders and Survivors”

**Statement by Chaloka Beyani, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of
internally displaced persons (IDPs)**

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, Peace and Security agenda. The intersection between 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 in bringing about development in situations of post conflict.

As part of my Mandate, I enter into dialogue with Governments and the international community alike to advise and advocate for the best possible protection of 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, Cote d'Ivoire, Haiti, and Ukraine. These field missions are significant in that they provide an early warning system to the international community through the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, and this instance, the Security Council itself, on the actual causes, conditions, and situations of displacement. My mandate receives specific support from UN agencies and entities, in particular OHCHR, UNHCR and OCHA, 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 IDPs internationally. I am grateful for the ever increasing cooperation extended by states to my mandate. I would also like to highlight the Arria Formula meeting on the protection of IDPs, co-chaired in May 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 of persons forcibly displaced within their own countries due to armed conflict, generalized violence or human rights violations: 33.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), 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 IDP women and girls. The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which detail specific rights of IDP women and girls, have been recognized by the GA and in SC Resolutions. The Guiding Principles have informed the inclusion of concrete and progressive provisions on internally displaced women in subsequent instruments such as the 2006 Great Lakes Pact on Security, Stability and Development, and the 2009 AU IDP Kampala Convention. In 2013, I dedicated my thematic report to the Human Rights Council to the situation of internally displaced women, which I would like to draw to the attention of the Security Council during this debate.

Despite these positive developments, responses to internal displacement still do not adequately address the specific concerns and roles of women and girls. Women and girls, during situations of conflict and violence, flee to escape arbitrary killings, rape, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or starvation. They may have been the victims of these violations themselves, or see 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 sometimes suffer enforced sterilisation. As IDPs, women experience the various human rights challenges which are characteristic to displacement situations and which often place IDPs at greater risk than other affected populations. These 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, IDP women often face a 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 (minorities), 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. Some of these roles include being the only breadwinners and the increased burden of care over extended families. Internally displaced women risk their lives, safety, and physical integrity to protect their husbands and families. They tell me, 'if we let our husbands and male children to fetch firewood, food or water, they will be killed whereas we may be raped but spared death'.

Other specific protection concerns for IDP 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 which 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 were 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 these 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 these 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 husband's or father's, preventing them from accessing their land.

To respond to these 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, 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 no 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 SGBV in the context of internal displacement is also essential. In this regard, gender-sensitive training should be provided more systematically to police and military forces, judiciary and social workers. A stronger focus on prevention is also required within internally displaced households and communities, as well as engaging men and boys in these prevention and protection efforts. States should take all measures to combat impunity for SGBV, 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 healthcare 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 as well as 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 of 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, and participate fully in building peace, and in planning and management of their return, local integration or resettlement elsewhere. 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.