

# OSCE Special Human Dimension Meeting

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*Vienna, 15 September 2016 | Talking points of Alexandra Bilak, IDMC Director*

Thank you to Ambassador Steinmeier (German delegation to OSCE, Chair of OSCE during 2016) and Ambassador Pehrman (Finnish delegation to OSCE, Chair of Human Dimension Committee during 2016) for the kind invitation to participate in this event.

As the Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council's Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, I warmly welcome the initiative to convene this Special Human Dimension Meeting "Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees".

I am also particularly pleased to have been invited to present on the situation of internally displaced people in the OSCE region. This is an important opportunity to discuss the specific challenges affecting their assistance and protection.

## INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE OSCE REGION

### Figures

- At the end of 2015, there were 40.8 million people who had been forced to flee their homes as a consequence of conflict and violence around the world. By the beginning of this month, there were more than 4.3 million people internally displaced in the OSCE region, with the vast majority in Ukraine and Turkey
- Internal displacement figures in the region are compiled using different methodologies and vary in terms of how current they are. Some are based on surveys done many years ago (Turkey) while others are based on more current registration processes (Kosovo)
- Data disaggregated by age and sex is available in just under half of the countries in the region: Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Georgia, Kosovo, Turkey. Some countries also disaggregate data by location (Azerbaijan, Georgia) and diversity, such as ethnic group (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo). Ukraine also collects disaggregated data, but it is not publicly shared.

### Patterns of movement

- Internal displacement in Europe is overwhelmingly protracted. Three quarters of the people still internally displaced in the region in 2016 were displaced decades ago as a result of conflict and generalised violence, for example in Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus and Turkey.
- Some internally displaced people in the region have been displaced more than once over the years, interrupting their pursuit of durable solutions. In Georgia, Kosovo, Russia and Turkey they fled again as hostilities reignited over the course of their displacement.
- Hundreds of thousands of IDPs have returned, but many later moved back to their areas of refuge or on to a third location because of inadequate housing, the lack of jobs, limited access to services, poor infrastructure, insecurity and the marginalisation of ethnic minority returnees.

## Impacts on the displaced

- In our field research over the past decade we have seen how some IDPs in the region have found solutions on their own or with assistance, while the situation of other IDPs has stagnated or worsened. The main outstanding issues common to IDPs in all countries appear to be inadequate housing and limited access to livelihoods.
- Housing:
  - Acknowledging the insalubrious conditions and health and safety risks in collective centres, considerable international and national assistance has addressed some of the housing needs over the years (eg. Azerbaijan, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina). However, not all needs have been met.
  - Our research on innovative housing practices for IDP in urban areas revealed numerous good practices in Armenia, Georgia, Kosovo and other countries in the OSCE region that may be replicated elsewhere. These include:
    - Regularisation of informal settlements (Kosovo)
    - Privatisation of collective centres (Georgia)
    - Housing purchase certificates (Armenia)
- Livelihoods:
  - IDPs across the region struggle to access livelihoods and regain their self-reliance. Few have long-term jobs, and access to credit and land is difficult. Their coping mechanisms have included incurring debts, eating less, taking their children out of school and, in some cases, child labour. The majority of IDPs rely on social benefits as their main source of income.
  - Despite considerable assistance provided to IDPs on livelihoods, it remains an obstacle to solutions. Our research on protracted displacement uncovered several innovative livelihoods programmes for IDPs that may be replicable in the OSCE region. The best ones link livelihoods to housing tenure and include:
    - Transitional Solutions Initiative (Colombia)
    - Integrated support to IDPs and their hosts (Colombia)
    - Incremental upgrading (Somalia)

## End of displacement

- Despite decades of work to address the protection and assistance needs of IDPs in the region, the available data does not allow us to say to what degree solutions to displacement have been achieved. To be able to make this estimate and enable solutions for remaining IDPs, the following data is required:
  - how many IDPs in each country still have outstanding displacement-related needs, and what those needs are
  - the number of failed and successful returns, local integration and settlement elsewhere
  - the number of additional forced internal movements that IDPs have endured beyond their initial displacement
  - the number of IDPs currently on the registers who have emigrated or died
    - Countries in the region should follow Serbia, Kosovo and Georgia in conducting a formal profiling exercise of their internally displaced people to determine their outstanding displacement-related needs. This can inform durable solutions programmes with the most vulnerable IDPs being assisted as a matter of priority.
    - The OSCE Protection Checklist for displaced populations and affected communities is a highly useful tool for this exercise and should be translated and disseminated widely throughout the region. Access to non-government controlled areas should be facilitated for data collection.
    - This event is focusing on conflict-induced displacement. As a monitor of conflict, disaster and development-induced displacement, IDMC would also like to draw attention to the lack of comprehensive data on disaster and development-induced displacement in OSCE countries. The result is that we cannot paint a comprehensive picture of internal displacement in the OSCE region.

We call on all OSCE participating states - and especially all of you with the important responsibility to help the internally displaced - to protect and address the specific needs of internally displaced people. IDMC stands ready to assist in these endeavours with its skills in terms of monitoring and analysis of internal displacement in the region.

Thank you.