

# Opening Statement by Dr. Francis M. Deng, Regional Workshop on Internal Displacement in the South Caucasus

**Tbilisi, Georgia, May 10-12, 2000**

Your Excellency, Deputy Foreign Minister  
Honourable Representatives of the Government of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons and as Co-Director of the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement, I should like to welcome you to this workshop on internal displacement in the South Caucasus.

The objectives of this workshop are fourfold. First, to introduce to Governments and non-governmental organizations in the South Caucasus the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which I had the honour of presenting to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998. Since that time, the Guiding Principles have gained wide recognition at the international level as well as by regional organizations in Europe, Africa, and the Americas as an important tool for the protection and assistance of the internally displaced. It is my hope that they will be disseminated and applied effectively throughout the region. The second objective of this workshop is to stimulate the development of institutional and legal frameworks for addressing internal displacement and to reinforce local and national capacities. Third, it is the aim of the workshop to identify "best practices" at the local, national, regional and international levels. Finally, the workshop seeks to focus the attention of the international community on the plight of internally displaced persons in the South Caucasus.

An impressive array of participants from the three South Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is gathered here today to work towards these ends. Our coming together at this workshop reflects our shared concern about the problems of internal displacement in the region. The rich cross-section of participants—from governments, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and regional and international organisations, as well as international experts—is an indication of the potential for partnerships among us to address the situations of internal displacement in a collaborative and comprehensive manner. I hope that this workshop will only be the beginning of our joint efforts to make a difference.

Before closing, I would like to give special thanks to a number of individuals whose efforts have been essential to the organization of the workshop: Vladimir Shkolnikov, Nadzeya Zhukava, and Irek Stepinski of OSCE/ODIHR, Hans Dieset of the Norwegian Refugee Council, Gimena Sanchez and Roberta Cohen of the Brookings Project, and Simon Bagshaw of my Office, who has played a particularly active role.

Thank you all for coming. I look forward to a successful and productive meeting.

