

Background Paper

International Colloquy on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Vienna, Austria, September 2000

Introduction

Internal displacement has emerged in recent years as one of the most pressing humanitarian, human rights and political issues now confronting the international community. Globally, there are an estimated 20 to 25 million persons, forcibly displaced within the borders of their own countries by conflict and human rights violations, often in acute need of protection and assistance. There are also millions of persons internally displaced by natural disasters and other causes.

In 1992, in response to increasing international concern at their numbers and their need for assistance and protection, the UN Secretary-General, at the request of the Commission on Human Rights, appointed Dr. Francis M. Deng as Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons. The mandate of the Representative has since been renewed on three occasions, most recently in 1998. During this time the Representative has focused on three main areas of work: developing a legal framework for the protection and assistance of the internally displaced, resulting in the elaboration of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; visits to countries affected by internal displacement; and promoting an institutional framework at both the international and regional levels.

History and Development of the Guiding Principles

The development of a legal framework for the internally displaced has been a key feature of the mandate since its inception. The Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly requested the Representative to examine the applicability of existing international law to the protection and provision of assistance to the internally displaced, possible additional measures to strengthen the implementation of these laws, and alternatives for addressing protection needs not adequately covered by existing instruments. International organizations and NGOs also urged the Representative to bring together into one compact document the various provisions of international law applicable to the internally displaced.

Together with a team of international legal experts, the Representative studied the extent to which international law (human rights law, humanitarian law and refugee law by analogy) provides adequate protection for internally displaced persons. In a two-part *Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms*,¹ published by the UN in 1996 and 1998, the

¹ See *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/57. Compilation and analysis of legal norms*. UN doc.

team found that while existing law covers many aspects of relevance to the situation of internally displaced persons, there nonetheless exist significant gaps and grey areas where the law fails to provide sufficient protection. They recommended bringing together into one document all the legal provisions relevant to the internally displaced and addressing the identified gaps and grey areas. Requested by the Commission and General Assembly to develop an appropriate normative framework based on the Compilation's findings, the Representative and the legal team produced the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

The Guiding Principles were developed over a period of several years and finalized at an expert consultation hosted by the Government of Austria in January 1998. The process was a broad-based one which brought together legal experts from all different parts of the world and included representatives of international organizations, regional intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and research and academic institutions.

Although not a binding instrument, the Guiding Principles restate the existing norms of human rights and humanitarian law as well as analogous refugee law that are relevant to the internally displaced. They also fill grey areas and gaps by making explicit what has already been found to be implicit in the law. They set forth the rights of internally displaced persons and the obligations of governments, insurgent groups and other actors toward these populations in all phases of displacement, providing protection against arbitrary displacement, protection and assistance during displacement and during return or resettlement and reintegration.

Dissemination and Use of the Guiding Principles

Since their presentation by the Representative to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998, the Guiding Principles have been widely acknowledged by UN bodies. The Commission and General Assembly, in unanimously adopted resolutions, have taken note of them and of the Representative's intention to make use them in his work, have welcomed the fact that the Representative has used the Principles in his dialogues with governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and have requested him to continue his efforts. They have also encouraged the further dissemination and application of the Principles, including through regional and other seminars on internal displacement. Even earlier, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, composed of the major international humanitarian, human rights and development agencies and NGOs, welcomed the Guiding Principles and called upon its members to disseminate them and have their staffs apply them, especially in the field. The UN Secretary-General has cited the Guiding Principles as a major achievement in the humanitarian area and recommended to the Security Council that in cases of massive displacement, it encourage states to follow the legal guidance provided in the Principles.

E/CN.4/1996/52/Add.2 (1996) and *Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Francis M. Deng, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/39. Addendum. Compilation and Analysis of Legal Norms, Part II: Legal Aspects Relating to the Protection against Arbitrary Displacement*. UN doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.1 (1998).

The Council indeed has begun to refer to them in its Presidential statements and resolutions.

Following this positive reception, the UN and other international agencies, regional bodies and international and local NGOs began to widely circulate and promote the Principles. To help international organizations and NGOs apply them in the field, the UN in 1999 published a *[Handbook for Applying the Guiding Principles](#)* (PDF format) which spells out the meaning of the Principles in non-technical language and provides suggestions for their practical realization. A *[Manual on Field Practice in Internal Displacement](#)* (PDF format), which contains examples of field initiatives supporting the application of the Principles, has been published by the UN as well. Further, an inter-agency training package is being developed to promote application of the Principles. And *Annotations* to the Principles, explaining the legal provisions upon which they are based, have been published by the American Society of International Law and the Brookings Institution.

These combined efforts have contributed to the Principles being used as an advocacy tool by international organizations and NGOs in their work on behalf of the displaced. Governments also are finding the Guiding Principles a useful guide for the development of laws on internal displacement and as a yardstick for measuring conditions in their countries. A number have publicly praised the development of the Principles and several governments in countries with serious situations of internal displacement have actively supported and participated in seminars on the Principles.

At the same time, there are governments which have begun to question the innovative process by which the Guiding Principles were developed. At the July 2000 session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a number of governments expressed the view that principles not drafted or formally adopted by governments cannot have real standing. Yet these same governments are among those that have voted for the Commission and General Assembly resolutions encouraging the development of the Guiding Principles, recommending their wide dissemination, and requesting the Representative to use them as the basis for his dialogue with governments. They have also supported decisions by regional bodies to disseminate the Principles.

The Guiding Principles and the Vienna Colloquy

The principal objectives of the Vienna Colloquy are to review and evaluate how the Guiding Principles have been received at the international, regional and national levels and to explore how best to further promote their implementation in situations of internal displacement. The Colloquy will discuss the current status of the Principles and will consider different means at the national, regional and international levels to further their implementation, including the integration of the Principles into the work of existing structures, the development of new implementation machinery, the creation of worldwide monitoring and information networks, and the mobilization of international constituencies worldwide.

Integrating the Guiding Principles into Existing Structures

As already noted, the integration of the Principles into the work of existing actors at the international, regional and national levels is well underway. Nonetheless, this needs to be strengthened and additional steps considered.

At the International Level

At the international level, the UN Commission on Human Rights consistently has emphasized the importance of integrating the internal displacement issue into the activities of other parts of the UN human rights system. Specifically, the Commission has called upon the UN special procedures (thematic and country rapporteurs, representatives, working groups, experts) and treaty monitoring bodies to seek information on situations which have already created or could create internal displacement and to include relevant information and recommendations in their reports.

In response, some thematic mechanisms, for example, the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions has begun to consistently refer to internal displacement and the Guiding Principles in reports and in relevant urgent appeals. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has consistently drawn attention to internally displaced children and called for observance of the Guiding Principles by all relevant actors. The Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances have also done some reporting on the issue, but thematic mechanisms could do far more. With regard to country rapporteurs and experts, the Independent Expert on Somalia has referred to internal displacement in that country in some detail, including the lack of an adequate international response to the problem and has drawn attention to the Guiding Principles. There is need for other country rapporteurs to more systematically refer to internal displacement and make use of the Guiding Principles in situations where there are substantial numbers of internally displaced persons.

With regard to the treaty bodies (which review states' compliance with human rights treaty provisions), a number have begun to address internal displacement situations, although the Guiding Principles have not been consistently integrated into their work. Some do invoke non-binding human rights instruments, although none have referred to the Guiding Principles in their concluding observations.

The Commission on Human Rights also has consistently called upon the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to develop technical assistance projects to promote the human rights of internally displaced persons as part of its advisory services programs in the field. Indeed, there is broad scope for the integration of the Guiding Principles into these field projects, a goal which has not yet been effectively realized. Nonetheless, field staff of this Office have begun to apply the Principles in their advocacy and monitoring activities, and have facilitated their translation into local languages and incorporation into training programs.

The issue of internal displacement is also beginning to be integrated into the work of international and regional tribunals. The statutes of the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the International Criminal Court recognize forcible population transfer and ethnic cleansing as a criminal offence. The European Court of Human Rights also has begun to act in cases of internal displacement, in particular on the issue of property.

As noted above, the international humanitarian system, within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), has been widely disseminating the Principles and integrating situations of internal displacement in their work. The policy on protection of internally displaced persons, adopted by the IASC in December 1999, provides a framework for activities in this regard. However, training programs are only just being developed in the Principles and reporting requirements by field workers on situations of internal displacement do not yet exist. To be sure, international organizations are increasingly focusing greater attention and resources on cases of internal displacement, for example UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but the system largely remains *ad hoc*. As of this month, a senior coordinator on internal displacement has been appointed within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to lead an inter-agency network. The network will examine a series of country situations with a view to ensuring an adequate humanitarian response and appropriate coordination mechanisms. In evaluating field operations and making recommendations for follow-up, the network should consider working within the framework of the Guiding Principles, especially so as to ensure that particular attention is paid to protection issues.

At the Regional Level

A number of regional organizations have begun to take note of, disseminate and apply the Principles. The Commission for Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has formally expressed appreciation of the Principles, and several OAU-sponsored seminars have emphasized the importance of the Principles to Africa. In particular, [a seminar on Internal Displacement in Africa](#), co-sponsored by the OAU, UNHCR and the Brookings Institution, called for the wide dissemination and application of the Guiding Principles in Africa. The country missions of the OAU Commission on Refugees have also begun to include internally displaced persons but not in any systematic way. In the Americas, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) has appointed a Rapporteur on Internally Displaced Persons, has formally welcomed and expressed support for the Guiding Principles, and in its missions to different countries, has begun to measure conditions on the ground in terms of the Principles. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has disseminated the Principles to its participating states and staff. In May of this year, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) co-sponsored a regional workshop on internal displacement in the South Caucasus,² which sought to promote the application of the Guiding Principles in the region. One of the stated aims of the OSCE's forthcoming

² The other sponsors were The Brookings Institution and The Norwegian Refugee Council.

Supplementary Human Dimension Seminar on Migration and Internal Displacement, to be held on 25 September, is to elaborate how OSCE bodies, institutions, field operations and participating states could play a role in the practical application of the Principles. The Commonwealth, for its part, has expressed encouragement for the Representative's efforts to develop a normative framework for internally displaced persons through the development of the Guiding Principles and has recommended greater observance of human rights and humanitarian law in situations of displacement.

Many additional steps, however, could be taken by these and other regional bodies and will be the subject of discussion at the Colloquy. In Asia, the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have not to date addressed the issue of internal displacement despite the increasing and vocal interest among Asian NGOs, academics, journalists and members of national human rights commissions in regional efforts to address the problem. One promising initiative on the horizon, however, is the work of The Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (see below).

Regional NGOs have played an especially critical role in mobilizing attention to situations of displacement. In Asia, for example, Forum Asia and the South Asia Forum For Human Rights have organized conferences, published reports and engaged in public advocacy whereas in the Americas, the Permanent Consultation on Internal Displacement in the Americas has drawn regional attention to the problem through country visits. In the Southern Caucasus, national NGOs have joined on a regionwide basis to monitor compliance with the Guiding Principles; in particular, lawyers groups in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia plan to monitor the laws and practices in their respective countries with a view to recommending improvements in light of the Principles.

At the National Level

Mention has already been made of the fact that a number of governments are using the Principles and have encouraged seminars and training in them for government, military and police personnel, as well as for parliamentarians and members of civil society. It has also been noted that a number of governments have translated the Principles into local languages. But by and large it is national NGOs which remain at the forefront of the issue, in particular through their direct work with displaced persons, their convening of workshops to train in the Guiding Principles, and through their use of the media to draw attention to particular situations. Closer working relationships between national and international NGOs should be encouraged in the form of joint advocacy and regional and international monitoring and information networks.

A particularly encouraging initiative at the national level is the promotion of the Guiding Principles through national human rights commissions, which have come to play an important role in Asia. A regional conference on [Internal Displacement in Asia](#), held in

February 2000 in Bangkok,³ proposed that national human rights commissions focus on the rights of the internally displaced, press for the observance of the Guiding Principles and promote specific steps to protect internally displaced persons. In August, the annual Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (ASPAC) expressed support for a greater role for national human rights commissions with the internally displaced and is planning to convene a seminar to promote this.

The unique role of academic and research institutions in different countries should also be underscored. Increasingly, they have begun to integrate the subject of internal displacement into migration courses, undertake needed research, hold conferences to raise attention to the issue, and promote joint academic and NGO activities on behalf of the Guiding Principles.

Possibilities for New Machinery to Promote Implementation of the Guiding Principles

Beyond integrating the Guiding Principles into the work of existing institutions at the national, regional and international levels, consideration should also be given to the potential for creating new machinery. Because the Principles are a non-binding instrument, the question in fact often arises as to whether special machinery could and should be developed to promote their implementation.

The establishment of formal machinery within the UN for promoting implementation of non-binding human rights instruments (such as declarations, standard minimum rules, guidelines, codes of conduct, basic principles and guiding principles) is not unusual, not least of all because non-binding human rights standards comprise the majority of human rights instruments adopted by the UN. Indeed, there is much to be said in support of the use of such standards especially as, unlike treaties which have long drafting and ratification delays, they can be applied immediately to address pressing concerns. Generally, they are drafted by governments and adopted or endorsed by a resolution of a UN organ, such as the General Assembly.

In the case of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, they have not been drafted by governments or formally adopted by a political organ of the UN. Nonetheless, they have been acknowledged, disseminated by the UN and are being widely used. The precedents that exist for promoting the implementation of non-binding human rights instruments, as set forth below, may therefore be instructive for the Guiding Principles.

Promoting Implementation through Reporting

One model to consider is the implementation measures provided for in the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, these Rules themselves contain a monitoring process in the

³ The Conference was hosted by Forum Asia and the University of Chulalongkorn and sponsored by UNHCR, the Brookings Institution Project on Internal Displacement, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the U.S. Committee for Refugees.

form of a Special Rapporteur, who reports to the UN (the Commission on Social Development). The Special Rapporteur is expected to assist each state assess its level of implementation of the Rules, measure its progress, and identify "obstacles and suggest suitable measures that would contribute to the successful implementation of the Rules." In the course of doing so he/she is expected to consult with a "panel of experts," drawn primarily from major international NGOs of persons with disabilities but also from national NGOs. Furthermore, UN agencies are to "cooperate with the Special Rapporteur in the implementation and monitoring of the Rules at the national level."

As to the seriousness with which the Rules have been taken by states, the Special Rapporteur has found that while "no country, not even among the most advanced countries, has fully implemented the Rules," there is no doubt that the rules, in the short time since their adoption, "have been widely accepted and are being used as the main policy guidelines in the disability field both by governments and [NGOs]."⁴ Indeed, the response rate to the Special Rapporteur's two surveys on the implementation of the Rules, undertaken between December 1995 and August 1996, and in 1999, generated replies from 83 and 104 governments, respectively. According to the Special Rapporteur, all those governments that responded to the questionnaires "have made considerable efforts in providing information on a number of areas. Naturally, this has also had an awareness-raising effect in government administrations." Indeed, the Special Rapporteur's general impression is that "the Rules are well-known by disability experts in most government administrations around the world and that they are being widely used in a large number of countries."

UN agencies and NGOs also have been disseminating the Rules and providing information to the Special Rapporteur on their implementation. Some 115 NGOs, including national NGOs, provided information for the Special Rapporteur's 1999 survey. The Special Rapporteur considers the role of NGOs particularly important since their assessments of the situation often differ from that of governments, which "can stimulate national discussion."⁵

In addition, machinery for promoting implementation of non-binding instruments may also be established directly by UN resolutions. In the field of criminal justice, ECOSOC resolutions have invited states to submit periodic reports to the Secretary-General on the progress achieved in implementing particular standards. A 1970 secretariat working paper on the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, notes that the system of periodic reporting "gives to the Rules an official status enjoyed by few matters under the jurisdiction of the UN." Through periodic reports, the Secretary-General has the power "to inform the world of the status of enlightened correctional practice and the extension of the minimum conditions agreed upon by Member States," the exercise of which "amounts, in itself, to a powerful incentive for nations to compete in improving the

⁴ *Monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Annex. Final report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Social Development on monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.* UN doc. A/52/56 (1996), para. 130.

⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 126.

circumstances of those protected by the Rules."⁶ Indeed, five surveys were conducted between 1967 and 1990, which indicated that the Rules had been embodied in national legislation or prison laws and regulations.⁷

In 1993, this monitoring system was reformed and is now based on a questionnaire sent to governments which seeks "an in-depth understanding of the use and application of the Rules," based on "precise, comparable and quantifiable information on how the Rules are applied in practice."⁸ The Secretary-General's first report on the basis of the new questionnaire, submitted in 1996, was based on the replies of 72 states which was considered a "remarkably high response rate."⁹ By 1998 the total number of respondent states was 99.¹⁰

This kind of information gathering process (through questionnaires) was extended in 1998 to ten other non-binding instruments adopted by the UN in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice, and is deemed to constitute a "significant milestone" in promoting the use and application of UN standards and rules in this area through the identification by governments of their achievements and shortcomings.¹¹ NGOs have also played an important role in providing information in the context of the Secretary-General's information gathering process. They often provide something of a reality-check, tempering over-optimistic assessments by states as to their use and application of the various standards.

In the case of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Representative himself could, within the terms of reference of the Commission on Human Rights resolutions, send a questionnaire to states with a view to discerning the measures taken to implement the Principles and the factors and difficulties affecting their application.¹² This

⁶ *The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners in the Light of Recent Developments in the Correctional Field. Working paper by the Secretariat, Fourth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders.* UN doc. A/CONF.43/3 (1970), para. 40.

⁷ *Implementation of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Report of the Secretary-General.* UN doc. A/CONF.144/11 (1990).

⁸ *Report of the Secretary-General. Addendum: Use and application of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.* UN doc. E/CN.15/1996/16/Add.1 (1996), para. 1.

⁹ *United Nations standards and norms in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Report of the Secretary-General.* UN doc. E/CN.15/1996/16 (1996), para. 26.

¹⁰ *Use and application of United Nations standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice. Report of the Secretary-General.* UN doc. E/CN.15/1998/8 (1998), para. 10.

¹¹ E/CN.15/1996/16, para. 29.

¹² Some precedent and scope for this exists in the Commission's request in 1998 that the Representative report on his use of the Guiding Principles in his dialogue with governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and on the views expressed to him. The Representative in fact did report to the Commission on the views of governments expressed in different intergovernmental and regional fora and in bilateral discussions. He also reported on the views of international agencies and NGOs (see E/CN.4/1999/79). Furthermore, the Commission has encouraged the Representative through continuous dialogue with governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue his analysis of the causes of internal displacement, the needs of those displaced, measures of prevention and ways to strengthen protection, assistance and solutions for the internally displaced. It has welcomed the fact that the Representative has made use of the Guiding Principles in his dialogue with governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and has requested him to continue his efforts in

might encourage states that have not yet done so to give consideration to the Principles and their application. It could also provide them with an opportunity to identify specific needs for which international assistance or technical cooperation is required. In addition, international and national NGOs and international agencies could be encouraged to submit information to complement states' responses as well as detail the ways and extent to which they have implemented the Principles in the field and the extent to which such efforts have promoted implementation of the Principles by states. It is noteworthy that reporting activities by organizations are envisaged by the IASC in its policy paper on protection of internally displaced persons and its supplementary guidance to Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators (RC/HCs) on their responsibilities in relation to internally displaced persons.¹³ Given the IASC's consideration of the Guiding Principles as "fundamental to a comprehensive response to the protection and assistance needs of IDPs in all phases of displacement", such reporting could be based on the Guiding Principles.

Establishment of a Panel of Experts

Still another option for promoting the implementation of non-binding instruments is through the establishment of an expert panel. The panel of experts established within the framework of the Standard Rules on disability, for example, has taken a number of steps to promote the Rules, including by disseminating information at NGO events and in declarations and reports issued by UN world conferences.¹⁴ In 1991, an *ad hoc* Meeting of Experts for the Evaluation of Implementation of UN Norms and Guidelines in Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice suggested the appointment of temporary or permanent advisors, or the establishment of working groups to promote the implementation of UN standards and norms in this area¹⁵ (such a body has not yet been established).

that regard. Issuing a questionnaire on the implementation of the Principles could therefore be a means through which the Representative could pursue continuous dialogue with governments. Moreover, in the case of countries to which the Representative has undertaken missions, it could be interpreted as part of the follow up process provided for by the Commission in having encouraged governments which have invited the Representative to visit their countries to follow-up on his recommendations and suggestions and to make available information on measures taken thereon. Of course, to be comprehensive, any reporting process should not be limited only to those states to which the Representative has undertaken missions.

¹³ The policy paper, adopted in 1999, provides that the RC/HC and the country team relay information on the protection requirements of internally displaced persons to the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC), the Representative, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the IASC-Working Group in order to ensure a timely and effective response. It also provides that the RC/HC, with input from the UN country team and other international organizations, report to the ERC on specific information on displaced populations and call particular attention to gaps in existing assistance and protection measures. This latter responsibility is also provided for in the IASC's supplementary guidance to RC/HC's on their responsibilities in relation to internally displaced persons, formulated in 2000. Also, the IASC's 1998 recommendations relating to the review of the capacity of the UN system for humanitarian assistance provide that the UN country team "should be made responsible for reporting on IDP situations on a regular basis through the Resident Coordinators and this function should be included in their job-description."

¹⁴ A/52/56, paras. 34-9.

¹⁵ Pursuant to Resolution 29 of the Eighth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

As concerns the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a "panel of experts" composed of NGOs, academics, representatives of displaced communities, and UN agencies could be established to review, advise and provide feedback and suggestions on promoting their implementation. This could involve the creation of networks of local groups to do monitoring on the ground. Establishment of a "friends of the mandate of the Representative of the Secretary-General," composed of eminent persons, could also be a way to promote high-level attention to situations of internal displacement and the implementation of the Guiding Principles. An eminent persons group could work together with an expert panel worldwide.

Conclusion

The development of worldwide implementation machinery for the Guiding Principles has become a possibility now that so many important actors have begun to disseminate and use the Principles. While this background paper has tried to build on existing national, regional and international structures, the meeting may also wish to consider alternative mechanisms for implementing the Guiding Principles.

The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has described the problem of internal displacement as creating "an unprecedented challenge for the international community: to find ways to respond to what is essentially an internal crisis." The development of the Guiding Principles represents an important step towards meeting this challenge. The emphasis now must be on giving practical and meaningful effect to the Guiding Principles on the ground through their active implementation.