



**Representative of the Secretary-General on  
Internally Displaced Persons**

4 July 2003

Statement of the Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons, Francis M. Deng, Concerning the Proposal for a Law on Internal Displacement in Peru

It is with great pleasure that I have learned of the recent initiative undertaken in the Congress of Peru to create a national legal framework for upholding the rights of the internally displaced persons. Increasingly, governments around the world have been finding it valuable to adopt laws and policies specifically dealing with the problems of persons who are internally displaced and to use the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the first international standards for displaced populations, as the framework for so doing.

When I visited Peru in 1995, I found a country still in the grips of civil strife, with hundreds of thousands of persons forcibly displaced by the conflict, drawn overwhelmingly from indigenous communities in particular the Asháninkas. The displaced were suffering from elevated levels of mortality and disease, lack of shelter, food, health services and education, and were particularly vulnerable to physical dangers and harm.

Since my visit, much has changed in Peru in just a few years. The virtual end of armed conflict and the rise of a democratically-elected government have dramatically altered the atmosphere and permitted many displaced persons to return home and others to integrate into new communities. However, the number of residual displaced in the country is not known and the lingering consequences of displacement for those that have resettled and returned have yet to be fully addressed. I understand that internally displaced persons living in the outskirts of Lima, for example, continue to live in poverty without access to proper shelter, medical and psychological care and formal employment. Although these displaced persons have managed to survive in sub-standard conditions as best as possible, many wish to become productive self-reliant members of Peruvian society. And while the desire to integrate is strong among urban displaced persons many, in particular older displaced persons, do not receive assistance or have the means to better their situation.

For these reasons, the reaffirmation of the rights of the internally displaced in Peru within a legal framework is a timely and important endeavor. A law upholding the rights of the internally displaced will not only serve to raise the visibility of Peruvians who remain internally displaced, it will help heal the deep wounds felt by those who are now formerly displaced.

As I often point out when invited to comment on similar situations around the globe, when a society upholds the rights of their displaced citizenry it is not merely assisting a particularly vulnerable sector of that society but planting the seeds of peace and supporting the national reconciliation process. I look forward to hearing about the progress of this initiative and to the renewed commitment by the Government of Peru to finding solutions to the remaining problems of internal displacement.