



WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA'S NATIONAL POLICY FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

OPENING STATEMENT BY PROFESSOR WALTER KÄLIN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

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Honourable Ministers and other Representatives of the Government of Uganda,
Distinguished Representatives of the United Nations,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Co-Director of the Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, I join with those who have spoken before me to warmly welcome you to this workshop on the Implementation of Uganda's National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons. At the outset, I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the Government of Uganda for hosting the workshop. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Country Team in Uganda for its assistance in organising the event. And finally, I would like in particular to welcome warmly the representatives of internally displaced persons from the districts hardest hit by displacement.

Of the nearly 24 million people worldwide who are displaced within their own countries due to armed conflict and communal strife, more than half are found in Africa. Of these, some 1.7 to two million are in Uganda. Although it is one of the countries worst-affected by internal displacement, Uganda is also one of the first countries in the world to have adopted a national policy aimed at upholding the rights of its internally displaced population.

My predecessor, Francis Deng, undertook an official visit to Uganda in 2003 and had the opportunity to discuss the draft of the policy with officials from the Office of the Prime Minister. He found the policy to be "comprehensive and rich in substance."¹ The policy, which draws from the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, was adopted in 2004 and provides a sound example for other countries to follow in adapting these international standards on internal displacement to a national context. Indeed, I often cite Uganda's policy as one of the best.

The work of a policy cannot, however, stop at its adoption. In order to enhance the protection of internally displaced persons, it must also be effectively implemented. As part of my mandate is to conduct dialogues with governments concerned, I felt it would be useful to return to Uganda

to follow up on my predecessor's mission, and in this context to contribute to the implementation of the policy. Building on the workshop on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict organized by OCHA in 2004, the objective of this workshop is to identify current challenges to implementing the national policy in Uganda, and how best to respond to them. We shall approach these questions from a pragmatic standpoint, focusing on specific aspects of the policy's implementation. These include, for example, the capacity of the different stakeholders, ongoing security and protection concerns, and the institutional and financial arrangements in place to implement the policy and provide durable solutions for the internally displaced. I hope that our discussions will be frank and constructive, and move beyond politics in order to address the plight of the many victims of displacement in Northern Uganda.

In order to contribute to the workshop's aims, I felt it necessary to go to the north, where I spent three and a half days speaking with internally displaced persons, local government officials, the UPDF and representatives of the humanitarian community and civil society. These actors, as well as national human rights institutions, regional bodies, international organizations, donors and civil society, all have a role to play in reinforcing and assisting the fulfillment of national authorities' responsibilities to protect and assist the internally displaced. It is gratifying that all of these actors are represented in this room today.

As a contribution to our dialogue, I invited the Honorable Musa Ecweru, Minister of State for Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, and Commissioner Veronica Bichetero of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, to accompany me on part of the field visit. I was impressed by their dedication to the cause of enhancing the protection of the rights of IDPs and I believe that their level of commitment bodes well for the outcome of this workshop.

It is appropriate that this workshop is taking place now, following the launch of the Joint Monitoring Committee, through which the government aims to reinforce its commitment to enhancing full protection for the rights of IDPs. There is clearly momentum within Uganda to give greater consideration to issues of civilian protection as well as to effective coordination mechanisms in order fully to exercise its national responsibility. This workshop is an important part of that momentum.

Our coming together at this workshop reflects our shared concern about the problem of internal displacement in Uganda and our interest in seeing more effective implementation of the *National Policy for Internally Displaced Persons*. I very much look forward to our discussions and to the joint efforts that should emerge from this workshop to address these challenges and enhance the protection of the internally displaced in Uganda. Let us not forget that behind the statistics on the number of IDPs, camps, levels of nutrition and so on there are real human beings: children, women and men who suffer in camps and are affected by health problems, a lack of education, sparse food and water, widespread sexual and gender-based violence and many other problems, and who are turning to us for help. It is my hope and expectation that the outcome of the workshop will directly contribute to improving the situation of the individuals I met in camps in the north and all the other IDPs in this country.

ⁱ Report of Deng's mission to Uganda, UN Doc E/CN.4/2004/77/Add.1, 3 March 2004.