

Kampala Convention*: UN expert welcomes the establishment of the Conference of States Parties

HARARE (5 April 2017) – The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, today welcomed the holding of the first meeting of the Conference of State Parties to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).

Stressing the fact that the Kampala Convention is the first and only regional legally binding instrument for the protection and assistance of IDPs, incorporates the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into it, and is unique in many respects, the Special Rapporteur stated that “by ratifying the Convention, States Parties have set an important example for all other African States in showing political will to fulfil their obligations towards IDPs. Their active participation in this landmark event speaks to their equally strong commitment to make concrete progress on implementing the Convention”.

Out of the 40.8 million persons internally displaced due to conflict at the end of 2015, an estimated 12.4 million were living in sub-Saharan Africa, with countless more internally displaced due to sudden onset disasters, such as floods. While precise data is not available, the continent is also impacted by displacement related to slow onset disasters, such as desertification and more frequent droughts, linked to the adverse effects of climate change.

While congratulating the States that have already signed and ratified the Convention, and encouraging other countries in the region to join them, the expert noted that States must equally now move beyond ratification and towards domestication. States must adopt concrete measures to ensure that this innovative and comprehensive agreement translates into real gains for internally displaced persons”, the Rapporteur said.

“It is critical to operationalise the Kampala Convention by identifying tangible measures that would be acted upon by authorities at all levels”, she noted. In promoting the effective implementation of the Convention, Ms Jimenez-Damary emphasised that it is paramount to keep in mind the most salient aspects of the Convention, including the participation of IDPs and communities affected by internal displacement in decision-making processes.

“I trust this Conference will serve as a constructive platform for exchange of expertise and experiences around challenges, good practices and lessons learnt in the implementation of the Convention, and as a mechanism for strengthening cooperation and solidarity among State Parties in preventing and addressing internal displacement. I stand ready to support the future work of the Conference, as well as the adoption and implementation of its Plan of Action”, the Special Rapporteur said.

“In line with the collaborative spirit in which the Kampala Convention was drafted, it is critical that its strong focus on partnership - between African Union Member States, the African Union Commission, regional mechanisms, international organizations and civil society - remains at the core of its implementation. I look forward to enhancing my collaboration with all stakeholders present here today in order to achieve the goals of the Convention” the Special Rapporteur concluded.

(*) The Kampala Convention was adopted in October 2009 and entered into force on 6 December 2012. Check the Convention: <http://www.unhcr.org/4ae9bede9.html>

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*Ms **Cecilia Jimenez-Damary** is a human rights lawyer specialized in forced displacement and was appointed Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons by the Human Rights Council in September 2016. Learn more, log on to: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/IDPersons/Pages/IDPersonsIndex.aspx>*

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