



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/4/38/Add.4
20 February 2007

Original: ENGLISH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Fourth session
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 60/251
OF 15 MARCH 2006 ENTITLED “HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL”**

**Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the
human rights of internally displaced persons, Walter Kälin**

Addendum*

**First Regional Conference on Internal Displacement in West Africa
(Abuja - 26-28 April 2006)**

* The summary of this report is circulated in all official languages. The report itself contained in the annex to the summary is circulated in the language of submission only.

Summary

The First Regional Conference on Internal Displacement in West Africa took place in Abuja from 26 to 28 April 2006, hosted by the Government of Nigeria. The conference was co-sponsored by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement and the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons.

The purpose of the conference was to explore the scope and nature of internal displacement in West Africa, the needs of the displaced, and national, regional and international responses. Over 70 participants attended the meeting, representing the ECOWAS Governments; the ECOWAS secretariat; national human rights institutions; the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; local, regional and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs); donor Governments; research institutions; and international organizations, including the United Nations.

This report presents in summary form the substance of the discussions and the recommendations adopted at the end of the meeting.

Annex

**REPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS,
WALTER KÄLIN: FIRST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON INTERNAL
DISPLACEMENT IN WEST AFRICA (ABUJA - 26-28 APRIL 2006)**

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1	4
I. OPENING SESSION	2 - 7	4
II. OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES SUBREGION	8 - 14	5
III. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE: THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT	15 - 19	7
IV. NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	20 - 27	8
V. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY	28 - 30	10
VI. PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISPLACED	31 - 38	11
VII. RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES NEEDING SPECIAL ATTENTION	39 - 46	13
VIII. TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS: RETURN, RESETTLEMENT AND REINTEGRATION	47 - 55	15
IX. THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES AND THE AFRICAN UNION	56 - 61	18
X. THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE	62 - 66	19
XI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION	67 - 70	21
A. Recommendations for the national level	68	21
B. Recommendations for the Economic Community of West African States subregion	69	24
C. Recommendations for the international community	70	25

Introduction

1. The First Regional Conference on Internal Displacement in West Africa took place in Abuja, from 26 to 28 April 2006. Its aim was to explore the scope and nature of internal displacement in West Africa, the needs of the displaced, and national, regional and international responses. Over 70 participants attended the meeting, representing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Governments; the ECOWAS secretariat; national human rights institutions; the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; local, regional and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs); donor Governments; research institutions; and international organizations, including the United Nations.

I. OPENING SESSION

2. Moremi Soyinka-Onijala, Special Assistant to the President of Nigeria on Migration and Humanitarian Affairs, welcomed the participants and reflected on the diverse factors giving rise to internal displacement in West Africa, including conflict and natural disasters such as drought. She highlighted the increasing significance of internal displacement in West Africa, but acknowledged the difficulty of responding to the issue given the lack of reliable data on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the subregion. She underlined the importance of strengthening the protection of IDPs in West Africa, and encouraged participants to share best practices on this issue.

3. Colonel Mahamane Touré, ECOWAS Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defence and Security, welcomed the participants on behalf of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary. He called on the ECOWAS member States to develop nationwide responses to internal displacement based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and underscored the need for a framework to tackle the challenge of internal displacement on the national level and throughout the subregion. While recognizing that national Governments had primary responsibility for protecting the displaced within their borders, Colonel Touré urged ECOWAS Governments to facilitate international organizations' access to IDPs in need of protection and assistance.

4. The Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons (the Representative) thanked the federal Government of Nigeria and the co-sponsors of the conference. He observed that, in addition to being the most numerous, Africa's internally displaced persons were also among the world's most vulnerable. They were at high risk of armed attack, malnutrition, sexual violence, enforced military recruitment and disease. Durable solutions in the region were hindered by poor infrastructure and inadequate access to basic goods and services, including health and education facilities. He reflected that, as primary responsibility for IDPs rested with national authorities, it was particularly appropriate that the conference was hosted by the federal Government of Nigeria, which was in the process of developing a National Policy on Internal Displacement.

5. The Representative commended the conference as a reflection of shared concern for the plight of IDPs in the ECOWAS subregion. He welcomed the diversity of participants and praised the growing momentum in Africa to respond to internal displacement through the development of standards such as the Great Lakes regional protocol. Collaborative efforts to

address internal displacement were particularly crucial in West Africa, where the effects of conflicts and natural disasters had spread across borders to envelop the entire subregion, with dire economic and developmental consequences. He highlighted the need to establish reliable early-warning mechanisms and disaster prevention and mitigation systems, and stressed the importance of sharing best practices and channelling the lessons learned by countries coping with internal displacement into the creation of sound policies at the national and regional levels. As one of Africa's leading subregional organizations, ECOWAS had a vital part to play in these processes. He also mentioned the potential role of ECOWAS as an advocate for durable solutions and the specific inclusion of displaced persons in peace processes.

6. Marie-Christine Bocoum, Deputy-Director of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Africa Bureau, welcomed the participants on behalf of UNHCR. While the number of refugees was the lowest it had been in a quarter century, Ms. Bocoum observed, the global internal displacement situation had reached a critical point. Various African peace processes had yielded positive results for the internally displaced, and the recent closure of the last IDP camp in Liberia was flagged as an important sign of success in the pursuit of durable solutions. Yet, Ms. Bocoum urged the participants not to be complacent, as West Africa continued to grapple with severe displacement problems in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, the recent wave of displacement in Guinea-Bissau highlighted the potential for renewed displacement in the subregion.

7. Ms. Bocoum reflected that the United Nations was beginning to make discernible progress towards assisting and protecting IDPs, through the assignment of sectoral responsibilities to different agencies through the "cluster approach". UNHCR has agreed to expand its role to encompass IDP protection, camp management and coordination, and emergency shelter. Ms. Bocoum concluded that the conference was a valuable cooperative endeavour.

II. OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT IN THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES SUBREGION

8. This session addressed the scope of internal displacement in West Africa, in addition to its causes and consequences. Participants recognized that internal displacement was a pressing concern for individual ECOWAS member States, as well as for the subregion. While conflict was the principal source of internal displacement in West Africa, a range of other factors contributed, including natural disasters, poverty and development projects. The Norwegian Refugee Council's new report *In Need of Durable Solutions: The Revolving Door of Internal Displacement in West Africa* was presented as a valuable source of information on conflict-induced IDPs in the subregion.

9. Presenters stressed that West Africa faced a complex displacement situation, both internally and across borders. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre explained that, despite their imprecision, the figures on internal displacement in West Africa clearly indicated that the potential for massive population movements in the subregion remained very high. The lack of reliable figures posed a major hurdle for effective response, and calls were made for improved data collection, analysis and management systems.

10. The presenters explained that, since the 1990s, conflict-induced displacement in West Africa has been fuelled by four principal factors: competition for resources; the presence of rebel groups fighting externally supported proxy wars; endemic poverty and inequality; and the proliferation of small arms across the subregion. Following the outbreak of civil war in Liberia in 1999, violence ebbed and flowed across West Africa, particularly in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. The prevalence of extreme poverty across the subregion, in spite of abundant natural resources, created a pool of frustrated youths easily incited to take up arms. Failed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes led to continued activity by mercenary fighters both across and within borders. The central role of former Liberian President Charles Taylor in West Africa's "regional conflict" was underlined. The efforts of the Special Court in Sierra Leone to address allegations against Charles Taylor could have important implications for furthering accountability and the fight against impunity in West Africa.

11. In addition to these interconnected wars, Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Togo faced separate situations of conflict-induced displacement. In Nigeria, internal displacement erupted from ethnic and religious tensions exacerbated by inequitable access to resources and disagreements between "indigenous peoples" and "settlers". Internal displacement rates also rose following Nigeria's "cartoon riots" in early 2006 and the escalation of military conflict in the Niger delta region. The subregion's longest-running civil war in the Senegalese province of Casamance officially ended in 2004. However, in 2006 splits in rebel movements there led to renewed violence. Many IDPs returned to their homes after the 1998-1999 civil war in Guinea-Bissau, but political tensions continued to disrupt efforts to consolidate the peace, and in 2006 new waves of internal displacement arose. Togo experienced small-scale internal displacement and a large-scale exodus of refugees following national elections in 2005.

12. Many conflicts in West Africa were characterized by severe human rights abuses, with IDPs experiencing heightened vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence and forced recruitment, including of children. Adequate protection against these risks was rare in West Africa. Indeed, return programmes raised special protection concerns in ECOWAS countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. Non-registered IDPs and those who did not wish to return were often excluded from assistance and protection programmes. Return areas were often declared "safe" despite the persistence of serious security concerns such as landmines. Furthermore, in some cases IDPs received insufficient or misleading information about returns, which were often unsustainable due to lack of infrastructure, services and livelihood opportunities. Both presenters highlighted the inadequacy of long-term, post-emergency assistance in the subregion, with specific needs such as counselling and psychosocial programming often overlooked.

13. Although ethnicity and religion had often been cited as root causes for conflict and internal displacement in West Africa, participants recognized that these factors were more often manipulated to serve political interests, masking the genesis of displacement in poor governance, corruption, and inequitable access to land and other resources. Participants called for more democratic management of resources, and for concerted efforts to improve systems of governance and respect for political rights in the subregion, including participation in elections.

14. In a region fraught with armed conflict, the needs of those displaced for reasons other than war were often overlooked. Participants underlined the importance of addressing the needs of those displaced by natural disasters, poverty, food insecurity and development projects, particularly as these IDPs often faced serious vulnerabilities similar to those of war victims. The difficult task of relocating communities to prevent exposure to disasters such as floods and drought was also explored, with emphasis placed on the need for a sensitive, consultative approach to any proposed relocation.

III. NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE: THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

15. In the 1990s, international agencies began to recognize that displaced persons had specific and unique concerns, such as lack of housing and documentation, and difficulty in accessing health, education and other services typically reserved for locals. People forced from their homes often encountered discrimination on the basis of their displacement, and struggled to exercise political rights such as the right to vote. They also experienced heightened vulnerability to exploitation and sexual abuse, and the possibility of being separated from their families. While these vulnerabilities were often shared by refugees, the internally displaced did not benefit from the legal protection mechanisms specifically created for refugees. In 1994 the Commission on Human Rights charged the first Representative, Francis Deng, with the task of developing an appropriate normative framework for the protection of IDPs. The outcome was the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which were presented to the Commission on Human Rights in 1998.

16. The Guiding Principles are based on binding international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as refugee law by analogy. They clarify the significance of international human rights and humanitarian law in cases of internal displacement. They recognize that displacement can be caused by a broad range of circumstances, and address all phases of displacement, including prevention, protection and assistance, and durable solutions.

17. The Representative emphasized that the Guiding Principles affirm the responsibility of national Governments to protect those displaced within their borders, and reflect that sovereignty entails accountability on the part of national authorities towards the displaced. When Governments lack the capacity to provide adequate protection and assistance to IDPs, the international community has the right to extend support to the displaced. He also underlined the provisions in the Guiding Principles on protection from arbitrary displacement. While displacement due to apartheid, racism or religious discrimination are prohibited, the Guiding Principles recognize that some forcible displacement may be permissible, for example, to protect populations at risk from natural disasters, or for imperative military reasons. In these cases, the displacement cannot legitimately last any longer than absolutely necessary. In addition, the Guiding Principles address the provision of secure, dignified and durable solutions for IDPs, a particularly important concern in West Africa. The principle of freedom of choice regarding durable solutions was emphasized. As affirmed by the Guiding Principles, IDPs have the right to choose whether to return, remain where they are displaced, or resettle elsewhere in the country.

18. Participants considered the Guiding Principles a helpful tool for Governments, assisting them to identify their obligations and structure responses through national laws, strategies and plans of action. They provide guidance to international agencies and NGOs, enabling them to conduct effective needs assessments, formulate rights-based response strategies, and assess the degree to which national authorities were respectful of their obligations towards IDPs. The importance of implementing the Guiding Principles and the laws and policies flowing from them was strongly underlined.

19. A UNHCR officer explained that, in Africa, the Guiding Principles were being used and promoted through conferences, seminars and initiatives such as the African Union's efforts to develop a legal framework on IDPs. For example, in November 2004, Heads of State during the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region adopted a Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development which included a commitment to implement the Guiding Principles through a regional framework. This led to the drafting of a model national law and protocol on internal displacement which are expected to be accepted by Heads of State shortly. Participants stressed that the full range of stakeholders needed to be engaged in dialogue on the Guiding Principles; including IDPs themselves.

IV. NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

20. The panel opened with a presentation on the Framework for National Responsibility.¹ It sets out the characteristics of effective national responses to internal displacement, emphasizing that such responses must address all causes of internal displacement, as well as the needs of all groups in every affected area, at all phases of displacement. National responses should also involve the incorporation and coordination of each relevant level and branch of the Government.

21. The Framework identified 12 benchmarks of national responsibility, the first focusing on prevention activities. Other benchmarks included acknowledging problems of internal displacement and raising national awareness; gathering disaggregated, programmatically-focused data on IDPs; providing training to government officials, policymakers and administrators on the rights of IDPs; and creating national laws and policies on internal displacement. While there were a variety of models that could be followed in the development of national legislation on internal displacement, such as adopting comprehensive national laws or revising existing legislation, one necessary component of any national strategy had to be a clarification of national and local institutional responsibilities and the identification of a mechanism for coordination.

22. Additional benchmarks included designating a national institutional focal point on IDPs, and establishing a role for national human rights institutions on the issue. National responsibility also entailed the full participation of IDPs in decision-making processes; the provision of adequate support for the full range of durable solutions; and the allocation of adequate resources to respond to the problem. The creation of public-private partnerships was encouraged to marshal greater financial support for responses to internal displacement. The final benchmark of

¹ Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, *Addressing Internal Displacement: A Framework for National Responsibility*, Washington, D.C., 2005.

national responsibility was cooperation with the international community, particularly when national authorities lacked the capacity to mount a comprehensive response. Participants concurred that cooperation with the international community did not entail a threat to sovereignty.

23. Nigeria's efforts to develop a national policy on internal displacement were presented. Ms. Dayo Oluyemi-Kusa, Director, Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Nigeria, and member of the Nigerian Presidential Committee on Internally Displaced Persons explained that the Committee was established in January 2004, and was expected to submit its final report before the end of 2006. The Committee comprised representatives from a wide variety of institutions including the Ministries of Foreign and Internal Affairs, the National Commission for Refugees, the National Emergency Management Agency, the National Intelligence Agency and the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on Migration and Humanitarian Affairs. Its task was to draft a national policy on internal displacement to guide the different branches of government, donors and humanitarian agencies in the prevention of displacement, and the provision of protection and assistance to the displaced.

24. The draft policy incorporated the Guiding Principles, and allocated responsibility to the appropriate government bodies for different aspects of the short, medium and long-term response to internal displacement. It also established a governmental focal point on internal displacement, with a coordination mandate. In addition to establishing a system for the formal registration of IDPs, the draft policy attempted to acknowledge and respond to the particular vulnerabilities facing displaced women and children. The Nigerian approach included plans for the design and implementation of skills development, rehabilitation and reconstruction projects, as well as training in conflict resolution skills, with a view to increasing the sustainability of return processes.

25. The policy development process included consultations with concerned individuals and organizations across Nigeria; public hearings; visits to IDP settlements; cooperation with international agencies; and a comparative study of the IDP policies in other countries such as Uganda. The process faced many challenges including funding shortages and competition among different agencies concerned with the protection and expansion of their mandates. These pressures were mitigated through the support of the President of Nigeria, and it was recommended that other countries embarking on a similar process secure support for the initiative at the highest levels of government. Participants also stressed that national policies should be streamlined and sustainable despite changes in government.

26. Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to use national institutions to address internal displacement issues were then discussed by Roch Yao Gnabeli, Director of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action of the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims. While the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had launched a humanitarian campaign in response to the crisis faced in the country, it was important to recognize that host communities and NGOs played an invaluable role in assisting IDPs in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly those displaced by the coup. National and State-level efforts to cope with the internal displacement crisis had proven very difficult, in part because the internally displaced in Côte d'Ivoire were not a highly visible population. Many were sheltered by host

families living in remote areas, which made assessments of needs challenging. However, valuable progress had been made through the establishment of ministries with specific responsibility for IDP issues. For example, in 2005 the Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims was created and charged with identifying solutions to internal displacement, managing humanitarian assistance, and reinforcing social solidarity. In 2006, the Ministry initiated a campaign to identify the country's IDPs, and implemented projects to facilitate return and provide compensation to war victims.

27. It was acknowledged that while the national response was improving, it was essential to strengthen efforts in favour of the displaced, particularly in advance of national elections, which were expected to be vital for the attainment of peace and the resolution of the displacement situation. Participants identified the need for a global plan of action on internal displacement in Côte d'Ivoire, designed by the Government in cooperation with the full range of stakeholders including NGOs and donors, with the aim of improving the scope and coordination of protection and assistance efforts. The need to ensure that protection and assistance efforts also benefited Ivorian host families was highlighted.

V. THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

28. The presenters illustrated how, across West Africa, civil society organizations served as essential partners for Governments working to respond to internal displacement. Particularly when conflict weakened the ability of States to shoulder responsibility for the displaced, NGOs provided essential services to IDPs, from shelter and education to specialized health care for the survivors of sexual violence. Through these activities, NGOs developed specialized knowledge and capacities, which they in turn shared through networks and collaborative exercises. Throughout the discussion, participants stressed the importance of developing partnerships amongst NGOs, and between civil society organizations, Governments, and regional and international bodies, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. In this regard, the experiences of the Council of Churches of Sierra Leone and the West Africa Refugee and IDP Network (WARIPNET) were discussed.

29. NGOs in West Africa were involved in a wide range of activities to support the internally displaced, including: registering displaced populations; carrying out needs assessments; and raising awareness of the Guiding Principles, the Geneva Conventions, international human rights law and key concerns facing IDPs. Particularly during crises, NGOs were central actors in distributing relief supplies and implementing protection programmes. Civil society organizations also played a major role in facilitating durable solutions; supporting peace processes; advancing reconciliation; and fostering accountability for the injustices committed against the displaced. Through advocacy activities, NGOs drew attention to gaps in governmental and international responses to internal displacement, and contributed to the development of a comprehensive response. NGO networks such as WARIPNET enabled civil society actors to share knowledge and best practices, and helped harmonize responses to displacement across the region. Regional harmonization was acknowledged as essential to successful responses to both internal and cross-border displacement in West Africa. Participants discussed the problem of competition among civil society organizations, and effective approaches national Governments could take to promote cooperation and the effective use of

limited donor resources. For example, in Sierra Leone the Government had established a National Relief and Emergency Commission which convened regular meetings to coordinate the humanitarian response and reduce the unnecessary duplication of efforts. Once the emergency response phase passed, longer-term coordinating bodies were created, such as the National Child Protection Committee. The importance of political will to bring government and civil society actors together was underscored.

30. Several persistent challenges for civil society organizations were recognized, such as underfunding and lack of access to the affected populations. Beyond basic training, capacity-building for civil society organizations needed to address institutional development including strategic planning, auditing, resource mobilization, public-private partnerships, and the effective use of communications tools. Capacity-building activities needed to be accessible not only to civil society leaders, but also to government officials as well as the communities hosting IDPs. Participants cautioned against taking a “top down” approach that fostered dependence on assistance from NGOs and international agencies amongst IDP populations. Instead, humanitarian and development interventions needed to promote self-reliance and sustainability at the grass roots, amongst both the internally displaced and host populations.

VI. PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISPLACED

31. Given West Africa’s long history of armed violence, protection and assistance to the displaced during and after conflict was a principal concern for the subregion. During conflict, the displacement of civilians was often an indication of warring parties’ indifference to the protection of civilians or their willingness to attack civilians for political ends. Participants recognized the need to promote and uphold the Guiding Principles, international humanitarian law and other national and international laws to ensure the legal protection of IDPs and those at risk of displacement. The binding nature of international humanitarian law for State and non-State actors alike was emphasized.

32. Displacement rendered civilians increasingly vulnerable to impoverishment and abuse by undermining their community support systems and their ability to meet their most basic needs. Participants recognized that IDPs were entitled to receive assistance and protection particular to their needs, and noted that major protection issues for IDPs in West Africa included tensions between host and displaced populations; sexual and gender-based violence; the separation of family members; the exploitation of unaccompanied children; and the use of displacement as a method of warfare.

33. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) discussed the operational approach to protection and assistance it takes. ICRC aimed to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs of both the displaced population and the local community, and had found that a holistic, flexible and multidisciplinary approach tailored to the specific needs of civilians, including IDPs, was the most efficient. An effective response required the ability to deploy rapidly and operate in emergency settings. Protection activities of ICRC aimed to prevent and halt violations of human rights and humanitarian law, and addressed the causes of abuse, not only their consequences. Key protection activities included: making confidential approaches to the authorities or armed groups to persuade them to respect their obligations under humanitarian

law; facilitating the conclusion of agreements on humanitarian issues; reuniting separated families; exchanging messages between separated family members; and tracing missing persons. Other essential protection initiatives consisted of escorting IDPs across hostile terrain, helping IDPs regain their self-sufficiency, and assessing conditions in return communities.

34. Participants underlined the importance of integrating protection objectives into the design of assistance programmes. Effective and appropriate assistance programmes enabled IDPs to maintain an adequate standard of living as close as possible to their sociocultural context. It was stressed that assistance activities should support the relevant local authorities and community structures, and preserve the dignity of the recipients. Interventions should promote self-reliance; bolster existing coping mechanisms; and endeavour not to increase disparities between local residents and IDPs, which could foster hostility. In order to ensure the effective use of limited assistance resources, participants stressed the importance of carrying out reliable registration programmes, and collecting holistic data on IDPs as well as on the characteristics and needs of host and return communities. Clear communication with the recipients of assistance programmes was essential to avoid raising unrealistic expectations amongst recipient communities and ensuring that assistance programmes addressed the needs of the displaced.

35. Major challenges remained for humanitarian actors in West Africa. In addition to coordination concerns, it was noted that humanitarian actors had difficulty accessing the displaced. This was a result of political obstructionism, geographical or administrative constraints, and landmines. The safety of humanitarian workers was also a major concern. Funding was also a recurring challenge, particularly in situations that were not of significant strategic interest. Participants urged international actors to partner with the media to draw attention to the plight of IDPs in such situations, and leverage greater financial support for protection and assistance efforts. In addition, participants recognized the need to share information among partners, and highlighted the experiences of the IDP Protection Network in Côte d'Ivoire, an initiative developed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The network linked IDP protection issues with other key protection concerns such as the recruitment of child soldiers. By establishing protection subgroups, exchanging information and mapping the responsibilities taken on by different agencies, the network built momentum and capacity for effective responses.

36. Presenters and participants agreed that peacekeeping missions played an essential role in stabilizing the subregion and ensuring protection and assistance reached vulnerable populations including IDPs. Yet West Africa's experience with peacekeeping was troubled. Too often, troops that were trained for military combat were deployed on peacekeeping missions without the necessary humanitarian training. Identifying IDPs and other vulnerable populations had proven to be a challenge, resulting in ineffective distribution of protection and assistance services. Participants stressed that peacekeepers had to know who the displaced were and what rights they had in order to be responsive at a tactical level. This required information-sharing and increased predeployment and in-mission training on human rights issues in general, and IDP concerns in particular. Rigorous training should be offered to national military instructors, who would in turn work with their military hierarchies to institutionalize a rights-based approach to peacekeeping. Special attention needed to be paid to ensuring that a human rights expert was integrated into every peacekeeping team. Training opportunities were also required for national security officials and police who supported peacekeepers or had principal responsibility for the physical security of IDPs when peacekeeping missions were not deployed or were suspended.

37. Above all, participants emphasized that the attitude and behaviour of individual peacekeepers had to reflect respect for human rights. Cases of exploitation and abuse demanded rigorous sanctions, and more secure channels needed to be open for IDPs to raise complaints. Lessons learned regarding effective training and monitoring approaches to prevent these violations should be shared among different regions of Africa. National human rights institutions (NHRIs) could also make a valuable contribution to protecting IDPs' rights. As demonstrated by the experience of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, NHRIs could help uphold the rights of the internally displaced by working within camps; receiving and investigating complaints; carrying out training and civic education activities; facilitating the exchange of information among stakeholders; reporting to parliament; and monitoring governmental compliance with international treaty obligations. If so mandated, NHRIs could also use quasi-judicial powers to provide remedies such as compensation to the victims of human rights abuses. NHRIs could advise on mainstreaming IDP issues into national laws, and developing specific national policies on internal displacement. Indeed, NHRIs should be given a robust role under such policies.

38. Where displacement was principally confined to one region of a country, as it was in northern Uganda, NHRIs could help make the issue a national concern meriting the attention of authorities and the mobilization of resources. By working with the media, NHRIs could ensure issues of internal displacement were debated in the public domain, and that the Government's progress and inefficiencies in addressing the issue were documented and discussed. NHRIs also served to uphold IDPs' democratic rights. For instance, IDPs in northern Uganda were concerned they would be further marginalized for having voted predominantly against the Government in the country's last elections. The Uganda Human Rights Commission communicated with the Government regarding the IDPs' concerns, and received assurances that the population would not be penalized for expressing their democratic preferences. Participants recommended increased interregional dialogue among NHRIs, so that human rights bodies in the ECOWAS subregion could learn from the strategies of other NHRIs working to protect IDPs.

VII. RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES NEEDING SPECIAL ATTENTION

39. Participants from across the subregion shared serious concerns regarding the often extreme vulnerabilities faced by displaced women and children, as well as elderly and disabled IDPs. Women and girls constituted the majority of the subregion's population. They suffered from marginalization, especially in urban environments and particularly in times of conflict. Deliberate and systematic violence against women was an integral part of many armed conflicts in the subregion, a problem that was exacerbated by cultural resistance to talking openly about rape and sexual assault. Sexual and gender-based violence left many survivors traumatized or grappling with deep psychological scars. In Sierra Leone, 70 per cent of internally displaced girls who experienced sexual assault were abused by members of their own families, or aid workers in camps. The abuse of women and girl soldiers was also rampant. Across the region many peacekeepers and humanitarian workers pressured female IDPs, often minors, to have sex in exchange for material aid. This eroded trust and fostered aggressiveness, shock and hopelessness amongst many survivors. These problems were compounded by the fact that women and girls were most at risk of dismemberment, a crime carried out by rebels in Sierra Leone to terrorize and control civilian populations.

40. Problems of domestic violence against IDP women were also highlighted. During the conflicts in West Africa, many displaced women served as heads of households as their husbands and fathers were away fighting. They often developed new professional skills and became independent and economically self-reliant. Following family reunification, these women often suffered domestic violence from male family members unwilling to accept changes in traditional gender roles.

41. In addition to the threat of sexual abuse and exploitation, displaced children were at increased risk of recruitment, child labour and participation in crime. During displacement and following return and resettlement, IDP children often faced heightened vulnerability to impoverishment and lack of access to education and health care. These risks were especially severe for separated or unaccompanied children and pregnant girls. While international and regional standards such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ECOWAS instrument on children's rights clearly set out the rights of displaced and non-displaced children alike, too often these agreements were not implemented, which in turn increased the vulnerabilities IDP children faced as adolescents and young adults.

42. Too often, effective protection strategies for IDP children in West Africa were stymied by Governments' lack of resources. Furthermore, in many parts of the subregion, there was a lack of professionals, including social workers, with the specialized training necessary to adequately address the needs of IDP children, including former child combatants. Training on children's rights was urgently needed for non-State actors controlling territory in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire. The value of qualified national task forces focusing on children's rights was underscored, and participants commended the establishment of a task force in Côte d'Ivoire on children and armed conflict in areas controlled by non-State actors.

43. It was recognized that IDPs living in urban areas often faced special challenges, which exacerbated the other risks and vulnerabilities facing the displaced. Many IDPs in cities such as Monrovia were originally from rural communities, and lacked the skills to sustain themselves and integrate into the subregion's diverse and often troubled cities. IDPs unfamiliar with urban environments suffered heightened exposure to "urban ills" such as rape, child abuse, alcoholism, forced marriages and recruitment into prostitution. Many IDPs living in West African cities took shelter in drastically overcrowded, unsafe buildings where girls and women were at particularly high risk of assault. Participants recognized that these problems affected not only IDP communities, but entire cities and countries struggling to recover from conflict.

44. Various approaches to tackling and mitigating the risks and vulnerabilities borne by IDPs were discussed. Participants reiterated that improved data collection, monitoring and consultation processes were essential to productive advocacy on the rights of displaced women and children, and to the development of effective strategies to meet their needs. Specialized medical and psychosocial services were required for the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Court processes or truth and reconciliation commissions were also important to acknowledge the injustices committed against vulnerable populations, and provide support to survivors struggling to rebuild their lives.

45. Calls were raised for increased support and protection for women and children during return, resettlement and reintegration processes. Greater efforts were required to combat

domestic violence and ensure that IDP women could preserve and enhance the professional and livelihood skills they developed while displaced. Durable solutions needed to be presented in ways that children could understand, in order to ensure that they were aware of the existence of alternatives to continued displacement or taking up arms as child soldiers. Moreover, increased support was essential in return and resettlement communities to prevent abuse, discrimination and exploitation of IDP children, particularly former combatants.

46. Participants recommended increased support for family reunification programmes, and emphasized the need to provide care for unaccompanied children in a way that emulated family life, as families were the key social structure for child protection and development. Various presenters also advocated for the integration of provisions on displaced children into national child protection laws. Equally, participants urged ECOWAS member States to complete the ratification processes for international, regional and subregional human rights instruments. The ECOWAS Peer Review Mechanism should be applied to promote the protection of IDP children.

VIII. TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS: RETURN, RESETTLEMENT AND REINTEGRATION

47. Ensuring durable solutions to displacement was recognized as a critical challenge in West Africa particularly given the recent conclusion of a number of key peace agreements and the growing recognition that ending displacement was essential to the consolidation of peace. While return was often the durable solution of choice for IDPs in West Africa, participants reiterated that IDPs had the right to choose whether to return, remain in their host communities or resettle elsewhere in the country.

48. The challenges associated with providing durable solutions were illustrated by presentations on Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Experiences in Sierra Leone demonstrated the importance of taking an integrated approach to durable solutions for IDPs, refugees and former combatants. Mr. Mohamed Lamin Kamara, Deputy Foreign Minister of Sierra Leone, explained that, once the conflict in that country ended, durable solutions for an estimated 3.5 million refugees and IDPs were promoted through cooperation between civil society, donors and international agencies. The Government of Sierra Leone's ownership of the process was an essential ingredient for success. The Government established governmental institutions, such as the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), with responsibility for supervising, coordinating, and planning durable solutions. These bodies and their mandates evolved in response to changing needs on the ground. Drawing on instruments including the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the NaCSA took a rights-based approach to durable solutions, reflected in its key policy documents such as the Resettlement Strategy.

49. Major challenges included stabilizing food prices; restoring security and public services; developing a culture of respect for human rights; and raising awareness of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases that threatened the sustainability of the reconstruction process. Recognizing that failure to adopt a community-based approach to assistance would compound reconciliation problems, the Government adopted a policy of support which actively engaged

IDPs and their neighbours in camp management and resettlement committees. Social services and State-building were acknowledged as essential to the sustainability of solutions to displacement. Accordingly, the Government matched support for durable solutions with a reform process focused on retraining and equipping the army and police; reforming the legal, judicial and local government systems; and updating national macroeconomic policies. Initiatives were also introduced to address accountability, impunity, reparations and reconciliation.

50. Although significant progress had been made, serious problems remained including insecurity; donor dependency; inflation; lack of teachers, doctors, lawyers and magistrates; youth unemployment; and insufficient focus on livelihoods and grass-roots economic sustainability. Experiences in Sierra Leone suggested that inconsistencies at the regional level in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes created rifts in the peace process which could be capitalized on by rebels, causing further national and regional insecurity. As return, resettlement and reintegration represented long-term challenges, particularly for post-conflict Governments with limited capacities, the experiences of Sierra Leone confirmed the need for reliable, annually-distributed, long-term donor support.

51. While Sierra Leone's experiences pertained to post-conflict durable solutions, Nigeria grappled with supporting return, resettlement and reintegration following both communal conflict and natural disasters. In 2004, Bauchi State experienced an influx of 45,000 IDPs following ethno-religious conflict in Plateau State. In response to this crisis, the Bauchi State government commenced an emergency relief operation through the National Emergency Management Agency. A task force committee was established and mandated to resettle and integrate all IDPs who wished to remain in Bauchi State. The committee met with officials and leaders from host communities as well as IDPs, and began gathering comprehensive data on the displaced population. IDPs were also questioned regarding their intention to return to Plateau State. Most expressed their unwillingness to return, in light of their traumatic experiences in Plateau State, their shaken confidence in the willingness and ability of the state authorities to ensure security, and their high expectations for the Bauchi State government resettlement programme.

52. The task force committee began planning for the resettlement of 25,000 IDPs. This involved securing, clearing and demarcating resettlement land, creating bore holes, instigating vocational training and microcredit programmes, distributing construction materials, and planning for infrastructure and social services. Efforts to build shelters, infrastructure and schools and provide electricity were hampered by inadequate funding. The experience yielded valuable insights, such as the need for better resourced emergency management agencies not only nationally, but also at the State and local government levels. Adequate funding, equipment and staff were required. In addition to awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of inter-ethnic tolerance and peaceful coexistence, there was also a marked need for justice to be served to ensure that past wrongs were addressed. This could involve, for example, providing compensation and holding the perpetrators of ethnic violence to account. Participants called for action on the subregional level to counter bias and a lack of accountability in national justice systems, and to facilitate IDPs' access to these systems.

53. Jigawa State's resettlement programme focused on responding to displacement caused by fires and perennial flooding. Most of those forced from their homes by the fires and floods were particularly poor, and had experienced multiple displacements as they lived in inherently disaster-prone areas such as near river banks, in haphazardly built homes. Since 1999, Jigawa had supported five major resettlement projects. From the outset, the focus was on resettlement, as the state sought to discourage the displaced from returning to unsafe areas. The approach in Jigawa centred on establishing new villages and providing IDPs with access to housing in these communities. Homes and villages were created according to culturally appropriate designs with local materials. A "sweat equity" programme was devised that provided IDPs with the necessary building materials for their homes, in exchange for their labour in the construction process. Provisions were made to ensure that elderly people and widows who were unable to contribute their labour for construction still benefited from the scheme. The sweat equity approach necessitated extensive negotiations with the recipients, but eventually ensured community "buy-in" while enabling the IDPs to develop new construction skills. IDPs who participated in the programme formed cooperatives so they could work for other local projects, and were graded and paid by local skills acquisition centres according to proficiency. At the end of the construction process, the IDPs were presented with occupancy certificates, which provided security of tenure and increased IDPs' trust in the state's support for the project. Jigawa State's community-based approach to resettlement was recognized as a sustainable and empowering model. So successful was the programme that the state's social housing initiative adopted it in its own work.

54. The theme of reintegration and sustainable livelihoods was further developed by participants who highlighted the need to begin planning for durable solutions with an examination of the historical origins of conflict at different levels of society. Participants considered that it was only by responding to these causes of conflict and displacement that reintegration could be sustainable. Equally, participants emphasized the importance of confronting the socio-economic issues that give rise to displacement and threaten the durability of return, resettlement and reintegration processes. These analyses should involve the active participation of IDPs, and cooperation between all the different agencies involved in reintegration programmes.

55. Experiences in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia suggested that resolving land disputes and questions of land tenure were essential to enabling reintegration and sustainable livelihoods. For example, even after camp closures, many Liberian IDPs continued to live on private land where camps had existed. These IDPs were at risk of exploitation from landlords if their tenure situation was not regularized. In Côte d'Ivoire, providing training in mediation and negotiation proved to be a valuable way to avoid and resolve land disputes in return communities. Similarly, promoting local peacebuilding traditions and cooperative economic projects helped consolidate reconciliation and paved the way for productive reintegration. Grass-roots "early warning systems" were also recommended to identify emerging conflicts and address them locally before they threatened broader reintegration and community development processes.

IX. THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES AND THE AFRICAN UNION

56. At the subregional level, ECOWAS applied a combination of political, diplomatic and military approaches to respond to issues of internal displacement, placing emphasis on prevention, particularly through youth employment and livelihood programmes as well as early warning, mediation and arbitration efforts spearheaded by the ECOWAS Observation and Monitoring Centre and the Council of Elders. Where conflict prevention was not successful, ECOWAS had deployed peacekeepers, and was in the process of fine-tuning standby force arrangements. The evolving ECOWAS Emergency Response Unit and the West African Disaster Management Mechanism also held the potential to improve the response to internal displacement in the subregion. All those involved in these ECOWAS programmes required training on IDP issues and the Guiding Principles.

57. Participants urged ECOWAS to further develop its engagement on IDP issues by facilitating the creation of subregional networks on internal displacement. ECOWAS and African Union (AU) processes should be used to strengthen interregional dialogue on IDP issues. In addition, participants called on ECOWAS to encourage member States to create emergency response mechanisms and focal points for internal displacement. The ECOWAS secretariat itself was encouraged to appoint a focal person on IDPs in West Africa. Olu Arowobusoye, Director of Humanitarian Affairs at ECOWAS, suggested that an eminent dignitary could serve in this role, with responsibility for investigating and raising awareness of displacement issues, and promoting improved protection and assistance for IDPs in West Africa.

58. A number of norms and standards relevant to internal displacement had been developed by the ECOWAS member States, such as the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. These agreements provided ECOWAS with specialized systems, capacities and mechanisms to respond to the problem of internal displacement, but too often they were not ratified or effectively implemented by member States. ECOWAS Governments were urged to complete the ratification processes and implement the agreements conscientiously and promptly.

59. Participants recognized the need to bolster the limited capacities of the ECOWAS secretariat, and acknowledged that action on internal displacement through ECOWAS must be prompted by the leadership of the member States. To this end, participants recommended that ECOWAS member States disseminate and examine the recommendations drawn from the First Regional Conference on Internal Displacement in West Africa, and place the issue of internal displacement on the agenda of future ECOWAS and AU Ministerial and Heads of State meetings.

60. Mr. Bahame Tom Nyanduga, the Special Rapporteur on Refugees, IDPs and Asylum-Seekers in Africa explained his mandate and activities which were acknowledged by the participants as a key African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights protection mechanism for the subregion and the African continent overall. Established in May 2004, the Special Rapporteur's mandate involved investigating situations of internal displacement; carrying out

studies; and improving mechanisms for the protection of IDPs in Africa. The Special Rapporteur focused on integrating the Guiding Principles into the legal systems of African States, and supported the AU's legal framework initiative on IDPs. In addition, the Special Rapporteur advanced recommendations for action based on his fact-finding missions. States were urged to implement these recommendations, as well as those of the Representative. Participants joined the Special Rapporteur in expressing concern that many African States had never submitted national reports on compliance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which hindered effective analysis of how States could uphold their legal obligations towards citizens, including IDPs.

61. Participants welcomed the AU's efforts to develop a legal framework on internal displacement in Africa, and debated the value of creating a specific instrument on internal displacement in West Africa. ECOWAS member States were urged to examine any potential gaps in the legal framework for IDP protection in the subregion, and consider the development of a protocol, declaration or plan of action to address internal displacement in West Africa, bearing in mind that such efforts should be linked directly to donor initiatives and support programmes to ensure implementation. It was noted that political attitudes towards such initiatives on internal displacement and humanitarian intervention had changed radically over the past decades. While conservative interpretations of the concept of sovereignty once seriously hindered political and legal efforts to protect IDPs and other victims of massive human rights violations, States were increasingly willing to recognize their responsibilities towards their citizens, and the rights and obligations of international actors such as the AU to ensure that these responsibilities were respected.

X. THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

62. This session addressed the role of the international community in responding to internal displacement, with particular focus on the contributions made by United Nations agencies. The approach of the United Nations to internal displacement was premised on the recognition that national Governments bear primary responsibility for IDPs, but that where national Governments could not or would not fulfil this duty, international actors had a right to become involved. Given the complexity and scope of the problem of internal displacement, not only in West Africa but worldwide, a comprehensive response was beyond the capacity of any one organization. Efforts to improve the "collaborative approach" of the United Nations to internal displacement were explained and welcomed, particularly in light of long-standing difficulties regarding predictability, coordination and accountability in the international response.

63. The collaborative approach aimed to engage a broad range of actors to respond to the needs of IDPs, based on each organization's particular expertise. Under the collaborative approach, the Emergency Relief Coordinator was primarily responsible for overseeing international efforts and ensuring they meet the needs of IDPs. The Emergency Relief Coordinator was supported by the Representative, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and its Internal Displacement Division, and, at the national level, by the United Nations humanitarian or resident coordinator. The collaborative approach also entailed cooperation with other groups such as national Governments, ICRC and NGOs.

64. A comprehensive review of this approach, completed in 2005, highlighted several critical deficiencies in the system, including inefficiency, inconsistency, and a lack of transparency and accountability. Agencies declined involvement in certain internal displacement situations, leaving IDPs without adequate support. In order to tackle these problems, in 2006 different United Nations agencies were assigned lead responsibility for various aspects of the response to internal displacement, such as health, nutrition, water and sanitation, early recovery, logistics and emergency telecommunications. In particular, participants applauded UNHCR's decision to accept the lead role for protection, camp coordination and management, and emergency shelter for people internally displaced by armed conflict. It was emphasized that the success of the new approach depended on the development of solid partnerships, reliable needs assessments, comprehensive implementation strategies and consistent monitoring.

65. While these reforms represented critical improvements to the international response, notable challenges remained. For example, for agencies such as UNHCR, shouldering their new responsibilities required the development of additional capacities, as well as greater financial resources. Other agencies involved in the collaborative approach needed to expand their field presence and emergency response capabilities. Donors also needed to adopt a more coherent approach based on needs assessments and clearly articulated spending priorities. Other changes in the United Nations system were also expected to have significant implications for IDPs, such as the creation of a peacebuilding commission and the Human Rights Council, and the recognition of the "responsibility to protect" by Heads of State at the 2005 United Nations World Summit. The connection between these developments and the strengthening of the collaborative approach needed to be closely examined and monitored.

66. Participants discussed the international response to internal displacement in West Africa. United Nations agencies and international humanitarian and development organizations had been directly involved in providing assistance, protection and reintegration support to IDPs in countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal, Togo and Guinea-Bissau. The IDP Protection Network in Côte d'Ivoire was identified as an innovative approach to improving the international response to internal displacement, and participants recommended that the lessons learned through this experience be shared across the region. Participants emphasized that inadequate data and financial support undermined not only national but also international efforts to take responsibility for internal displacement. Protection activities were consistently under-resourced in West Africa. For instance, in the 2005 Consolidated Appeals Process, approximately US\$ 5.5 million was requested for protection activities for conflict-affected populations, including IDPs, in West Africa. Only 11 per cent of this figure was actually received. In light of this glaring shortage, participants recommended more concerted support for protection as an indispensable aspect of the international response. Participants also underlined the need to step up efforts to provide IDPs with food, shelter, health care and reconstruction support in ways that did not foster dependence, but promoted self-reliance and community sustainability. However, it was also acknowledged that humanitarian assistance could not substitute for advocacy and genuine political efforts at the national and international levels to address the root causes of displacement and negotiate an end to the conflicts that forced IDPs from their homes.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

67. The following recommendations are based on the recognition that national Governments bear primary responsibility for IDPs, but that civil society groups and donors as well as subregional, regional and international organizations also have essential roles to play in addressing internal displacement in West Africa. They reflect the strong consensus among participants that the vulnerabilities of the internally displaced must be acknowledged and responded to.

A. Recommendations for the national level

68. National Governments should:

- Promote and disseminate the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Acknowledged and accepted as the basic norm and framework for addressing internal displacement within the ECOWAS subregion, the Guiding Principles should be widely disseminated and promoted across West Africa. Personnel of all relevant organizations and institutions should be trained in the Guiding Principles. Efforts should also be made to popularize international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law in the subregion and ensure that IDPs themselves are aware of their rights;
- Develop national laws and policies on internal displacement based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. National laws, policies and plans of action should be based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and should be developed with the support of the highest levels of Government. They should be developed through a process of broad consultation and reflect a consensus at the national level on how best to address the particular protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons. All causes and phases of displacement should be addressed;
- Implement legal obligations relating to the internally displaced. States should ratify, implement and monitor international, regional and subregional human rights and humanitarian instruments relating to internal displacement. States should implement the recommendations of fact-finding missions of the international, regional and subregional human rights mechanisms related to internal displacement, such as the Special Rapporteur on Refugees, IDPs and Asylum Seekers in Africa and the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons;
- Build the capacity of national institutions and civil society organizations to address internal displacement. Capacity-building should go beyond basic training to address issues of institutional development including strategic planning, auditing, resource mobilization, public-private partnerships, and the effective use of communications tools;

- **Address the root causes of internal displacement. Activities should be developed to prevent and tackle the root causes of internal displacement. These activities should address reconciliation and peacebuilding, poverty alleviation, accountable governance and natural disaster mitigation. Early warning systems should also be developed;**
- **Engage all stakeholders, in particular IDPs, in decision-making and implementation processes regarding internal displacement. Decision-making processes and the implementation of programmes on internal displacement should involve the active consultation and participation of the full range of stakeholders, and particularly IDPs themselves. IDPs should also have the opportunity to take part in deliberations on internal displacement at all levels;**
- **Strengthen efforts to address the specific needs of IDPs with increased vulnerability. Among internally displaced persons, women, children, the elderly, and the disabled may have special needs which should be identified and addressed during all phases of displacement and in all contexts, including camps and urban environments;**
- **Ensure protection and assistance programmes address the needs of host communities. Host communities make invaluable contributions to assisting the internally displaced. Responses to internal displacement must take into account not only the needs of IDPs, but also the concerns of the families and communities that provide them shelter;**
- **Facilitate humanitarian access to the internally displaced. States should ensure that civil society partners and international agencies have safe and unhindered access to internally displaced populations requiring protection and assistance;**
- **Enhance protection and empowerment of IDP women. While displaced, many IDP women develop valuable professional and livelihood skills, particularly as heads of households. Greater efforts are required to ensure that IDP women can preserve and continue to develop these skills following return, resettlement and family reunification. Domestic violence against IDP women and the health and psychosocial needs of the survivors of sexual abuse also require increased attention from national authorities and NGOs;**
- **Promote IDPs' access to justice and reconciliation processes. Legal redress and reconciliation is essential to promote social cohesion and the sustainability of returns. IDPs' access to national justice systems should be facilitated and every effort should be made to combat impunity for human rights violations. Community-based approaches to reconciliation such as cooperative economic projects should also be pursued;**

- **Improve data collection on internal displacement in West Africa. Relevant State authorities, in conjunction with civil society organizations, academic institutions and international agencies should collaborate to improve methods of gathering, analysing and disseminating data on the location, condition and needs of IDPs and the communities in which they live. When appropriate, the internally displaced should be registered in conditions that do not threaten their security or undermine their privacy;**
- **Seek and apportion adequate resources for internal displacement. Human and material resources are required in order for States to meet their obligations towards internally displaced persons. Allocations for IDP programmes should be made in national budgets, and opportunities for public-private funding partnerships should be explored. International donors should provide consistent and reliable support;**
- **Provide durable solutions to internal displacement. A comprehensive approach to durable solutions is required that addresses the original causes of displacement as well as the vulnerability of IDPs and the communities in which they may be receiving shelter. In order to ensure the sustainability of return, resettlement and reintegration, post-conflict transition programmes should be implemented, as well as land tenure reform and employment generation programmes. In particular, youth unemployment should be addressed and skills training provided;**
- **Respect the right of the internally displaced to freedom of choice regarding durable solutions. Internally displaced persons have the right to choose whether to return, resettle or integrate locally. In order to make an informed choice, the displaced must be provided with accurate and comprehensive information about places of return, resettlement and reintegration, including the security situation and availability and adequacy of basic services and infrastructure;**
- **Improve protection and access to durable solutions for IDP children. Increased support should be directed towards family reunification programmes to lessen the risk of recruitment of IDP children into armed forces. Provisions on displaced children should be integrated into national child protection laws, and the ECOWAS Peer Review Mechanism should be applied to promote the protection of IDP children. Durable solutions should be presented in a way that children can understand, and support should be provided in return and resettlement communities to ensure that displaced children are able to integrate without risk of abuse, discrimination or exploitation. Specialized training should be provided to improve services for displaced children, particularly child combatants;**

- **Ensure clear and effective coordination among stakeholders. Organizations at the governmental, non-governmental, regional and international levels should coordinate their activities to ensure a comprehensive approach to internal displacement that avoids duplication of efforts and the inefficient use of resources. To this end, each ECOWAS State should identify a national focal point with responsibility for internal displacement issues.**
- **Harmonize responses to internal displacement across the subregion. Inconsistency in the implementation of programmes for IDPs and other war victims in West Africa erodes the sustainability of return and resettlement, and can undermine disarmament and demobilization processes. Efforts should be made to ensure the equitable treatment of IDPs and other vulnerable populations across the subregion;**
- **Disseminate and implement the recommendations of the First Regional Conference on Internal Displacement in West Africa at upcoming subregional forums. ECOWAS member States should ensure the conference recommendations are disseminated appropriately, including within ECOWAS mechanisms, particularly at upcoming Ministerial meetings and at the African Union Experts Meeting and Ministerial Conference on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons scheduled to take place in Burkina Faso in June 2006.**

B. Recommendations for the Economic Community of West African States subregion

69. States of the subregion should:

- **Strengthen the engagement of the Economic Community of West African States on issues of internal displacement. In this context, ECOWAS should place the issue of internal displacement on the agenda of upcoming Ministerial and Heads of State meetings. Member States should consider the development of a protocol, declaration or plan of action to address internal displacement in West Africa. Such efforts should be coordinated with the African Union and linked to donor initiatives, and support should be provided to ensure implementation. In addition, ECOWAS should encourage member States to create emergency response mechanisms and focal points for internal displacement, and should facilitate the development of networks working on issues of internal displacement;**
- **Reinforce the capacity of ECOWAS to advocate on issues of internal displacement. ECOWAS should appoint a focal point dedicated to addressing issues of internal displacement in West Africa. This person may be an eminent dignitary responsible for raising awareness of displacement issues, investigating situations of displacement, and promoting protection and assistance for IDPs in West Africa;**

- **Encourage ratification and implementation of relevant ECOWAS protocols. ECOWAS has developed various norms and standards relevant to internal displacement, including the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. State commitment to these protocols should be consolidated through universal ratification. ECOWAS should undertake regular monitoring of the implementation of these instruments;**
- **Encourage stronger interregional dialogue on issues of internal displacement. In particular, national human rights institutions from across Africa should meet and compare experiences in addressing internal displacement;**
- **Train the ECOWAS Standby Force on issues of internal displacement. ECOWAS has recognized that its standby force should be trained in the Guiding Principles. Training at all levels should take place before deployment, and reinforced regularly.**

C. Recommendations for the international community

70. The international community should:

- **Integrate protection issues into the design of peace operations and strengthen the capacity of peacekeepers to respond to internal displacement. The protection and assistance needs of the internally displaced should form part of any peacekeeping strategy. Peacekeepers, police and security officials should receive training in the Guiding Principles before and during deployment. Monitoring is essential to ensure that codes of conduct banning the exploitation of the displaced by peacekeeping forces are rigorously enforced;**
- **Ensure that international interventions on behalf of IDPs do not promote dependence but foster self-reliance and community sustainability. Local activities should include the establishment of community-based early warning mechanisms;**
- **Partner with the media to draw attention to the plight of IDPs. Media coverage should be sought to raise awareness of the challenges IDPs face in West Africa, and to leverage greater financial support for assistance and protection efforts.**
