



**Kingdom of Belgium**

Speech by Mrs Delphine Delieux, Counsellor & Alternate Political Coordinator

At the United Nations Security Council

**Arria**

**“Responding effectively to the needs of refugees, displaced persons and returnees. The role of the United Nations Security Council and its members.”**

New York, 20 June 2019

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Mr President,

We would like to start by thanking the three African members of the Council for their initiative in holding this meeting and the four briefers for their inspiring interventions.

Less than three months ago, we met for an information session with Mr Grandi, during which the shocking figure of 68.5 million displaced persons was mentioned. Today, just a few days after World Refugee Day, we are talking about 70 million people! 84% of refugees are currently being hosted in developing countries and regions. Many African countries top the list of both countries of origin and host countries. The recent examples of Cameroon, Burundi, Niger, Uganda and Ethiopia are worrying and illustrate the regional implications of flows of refugees.

We therefore welcome your collaboration with the African Union in bringing us together today to discuss this issue, particularly as it is the annual theme chosen by the AU for 2019.

Mr President,

We align with the declaration to be made by the European Union and we ourselves would like to draw your attention to three points: 1) flows of refugees as an early warning sign of emerging crises, 2) the importance of compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) to prevent flows of refugees and displaced persons, to offer them better protection and create the conditions for their return, and 3) the importance of international cooperation in regional and global stability.

Firstly, this significant increase in displaced persons cannot be the barometer of the decline in our ability to prevent, contain and resolve conflicts. The appearance of flows of refugees and internally displaced persons is very often a warning sign. These flows are an **early warning sign** and must, as such, be featured in analyses and

reports submitted to the Security Council in order to enhance our ability to prevent and respond.

Secondly, violations of IHL and human rights actually cause displacements, when civilians and civilian infrastructures become the direct target or are victims of indiscriminate attacks in a conflict, forcing them to flee. People flee when they are threatened, or subjected to forced recruitment, collective punishment or other violations such as sexual violence. Others leave because they no longer have access to essential goods and services, because hospitals, wastewater processing plants and schools are targeted, or because the entry of humanitarian aid is blocked. It is clear **that greater respect for IHL would reduce forced displacements, and also lead to better management of the current crisis of internal displacements.** Compliance with IHL means facilitating humanitarian action and assistance for displaced persons. Compliance with IHL also means providing protection and security for displaced persons during an armed conflict. Lastly, compliance with IHL means not bombing entire cities or the services essential to the survival of the civilian population, and thus helping to **create an environment favourable to the safe, dignified return of displaced persons.**

Finally, and this is my third point, the startling number of 70.8 million people is an opportunity for us to examine **regional and international cooperation.** We need to encourage greater collaboration between the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union in this area. Belgium supports the request by 57 Member States to the Secretary General to create a **High-Level Panel on Internally Displaced Persons.** This Panel would assess how Member States, the UN and other stakeholders can provide a better response to this issue.

Belgium naturally supports **the Global Compact on Refugees** and hopes that its adoption will breathe new life into this cooperation. The Compact rightly prioritises support for refugees and host countries, the sharing of responsibilities and costs, and the search for lasting solutions.

For all these reasons, Belgium has long been **a financial and strategic partner of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross** and other organisations working in this area, and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to their remarkable work in the field.

Thank you.