

## GFMD Speech climate and internal displacement

28 June 2028

- Good morning. I am grateful to the Government of France for inviting me to share some thoughts at the beginning of a day of deliberations on climate and mobility under the auspices of the migration and development forum.
- As the Adviser to the SG on internal displacement solutions, I am here on behalf of over **71 million people** who were in displacement at the end of 2022. Who have, at some point during the last one, five, maybe 10 or more years, been forced to flee their homes due to conflict, disasters, violence, or some toxic combination of all of these. Who have not crossed a border (yet) but remain in their own countries.
- What I want to underline first, is that displacement is **traumatic** for individuals and for families. It is catastrophic for progress and assets. It can set back a family and a community for decades, sometimes irreversibly. IDPs are amongst the most vulnerable persons on the planet.
- The second point I would underline, is that displacement is typically **a long-term issue**. Most think displacement is a short-term event. And it can be – 95% of Pakistan’s 8 million people displacement by the flood last year have returned home by now. But the vast majority of today’s 70+ million IDPs have been displaced for years and even decades. They are the displaced Colombians many of whom have been in displacement since the early 2000s when armed confrontations and attacks by armed groups spiked. They are the displaced Syrians, many of whom fled their villages and towns in 2012 when conflict erupted. They are the displaced Nigerians in the Northeast of the country who first fled Boko Haram’s violence more than 12 years ago.
- The third point I would underline, is that the phenomenon of internal displacement is growing fast. The total number of IDPs in late 2012 – 10 years ago – was about half of the numbers today.
- And fourth point I want to underline, and perhaps the most important for this forum, is that most of this displacement – not all but most - **represents a colossal failure of development**.
- The room is full of climate and migration experts. I won’t compete with them. Let me, instead, explain how high the stakes are, in getting this climate and mobility issue ‘right’. Allow me to represent the cost of failure if you will.
- From DRC to Colombia to Mali and beyond, we can look back with the benefit of hindsight to see how the right kind of development, in the right way, at the right place, could have averted so much of this suffering and upheaval. This message has been upheld UN resolution after resolution, report after report. How different the picture might have looked, had different choices been made at key points in the development trajectories of these countries.

- Migration is about mobility. And it is in many cases about people seeking better opportunities. As the World Bank's outstanding World Development Report documented this year, migration can also be a force for prosperity and can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It can be a coping mechanism. It's propelled by individuals making choices. Migrants – domestic and international – can be extraordinarily vulnerable in the process, make no mistake. But they have some degree of agency when they set out on their journey.
- Displacement is also about mobility. But here the similarities stop. Because displacement is about being forcibly uprooted from your home by forces outside of your control. For weeks, for months, for years, maybe for decades. It is about leaving your assets behind. Your livelihood. Your community. It is about entering a period of immense uncertainty. And it is about losing much of your agency at least in the first instance.
- My call today is for Governments and their development partners to manage these dynamics. To not let today's migration challenge become tomorrow's displacement crisis. Keep the task in the realm of Government policy making and development planning. Keep it away from Humanitarian appeals and emergency response. Keep it at the SDG forum and in the Economic and Social Council and away from the Security Council. Because the failure to manage these dynamics leads to enormous suffering further down the line.
- Conflict remains the major driver of long-term displacement around the world. But last year more people (32 million) were displaced due to disasters, the highest ever recorded and 98% of them weather related - be it floods, droughts, and storms. And climate and conflict are starting to reinforce each other in dangerous ways. In fact over **70% of people internally displaced by conflict** live in **highly climate vulnerable countries**.
- Looming ahead of us, the World Bank's Groundswell Reports warned of the potential of 216 million people being displaced by 2050 due to climate. The bad news is that these numbers are very conservative. The good news is that according to the same analysis, over 80% can be avoided with the right development interventions and Government leadership.
- **I have been tasked** by the SG to work with the UN system and with Member States, to relook at what needs to change in the way we respond to internal displacement to reverse today's ominous trends.
- **The first way we are doing so is to try to reverse the trend towards protracted displacement. Move more people, faster, out of displacement.** We are working in **16 pilot countries** with the UN team and the Government at how we can approach this 'solutions' task in new ways. Under Government leadership. With development actors and IFIs rather than emergency responders on the front line. We have the ambition of placing at least 10 million people on a solutions pathways across our 16 pilot countries. Climate change is profoundly influencing peoples' choices about solutions – Somalia's

2+ million people displaced in the last few years were displaced in the first instance by conflict. But their early preference to remain in their urban place of displacement on a permanent basis – rather than ‘return’ home – reflects their analysis that 5 years of drought has changed their livelihoods and lifestyles forever.

- **The second way to reduce today’s ominous trend, is to reverse the escalating number of new displacements tomorrow.** And here again, as we have said, weather-related disasters and climate events are critical. By making sure that Governments understand the risk. By ensuring adaptation strategies are anticipating and mitigating. By ensuring developments plans have this complex undertaking in their sights. We are working with the UNFCCC, the UNDRR, the Global Climate Fund, the World Bank and others to move this issue up the priority list so that together we can act on the analysis in the Groundswell reports.

We need help. Allow me to finish with 3 requests.

**First, please help make sure that climate financing is accessible to countries facing waves of displacement** due to climate related events.

- Trends show that the more unstable a state is, the less climate finance it receives.
- We need your help to shift risk-averse appetites amongst climate financing institutions.
- It is a travesty that countries like Somalia that are dealing with climate change so viscerally are so poorly supported by climate financing. The current negotiations around a Loss and Damages financial arrangement must land in a place where a country like Somalia can get the help to deal with the long-term consequences of drought displacement.

**Second, never lose sight of the underlying structural issues at work behind the more immediate-term manifestations. We can’t address displacement solutions with only our short-term humanitarian toolbox. There are long-term factors driving displacement – especially climate - and this needs a structural response.**

- We are witnessing an accelerated urbanization process in places like Somalia, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and elsewhere today for example.
- Fueled by insecurity in the first instance but driven by something deeper and structural related climate and livelihoods.
- We need to start planning differently, embracing the key role of mayors, embarking on the long-term transformation underway.

**Third, and finally, act early. Prevention is the best solution by far. Migration mobility does not have to become displacement.**

- This needs a joined-up approach. Humanitarian actors. Climate adaptation and mitigation actors. Development actors and financial institutions. Peace and security actors also.

Thank you.