

<b>Date:</b>	21 January 2020
<b>Place:</b>	UNHQ, New York
<b>Time:</b>	10.00-11.45
<b>Co-chairs:</b>	Omar Rabi (Morocco) and Eduardo Fernandez-Zincke (European Union)
<b>Minutes:</b>	Ineke Hordijk (European Union)
<b>Attachments:</b>	Presentation from the Envoy

## Summary

The Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) is a State-led initiative working towards greater protection of persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change. It is currently chaired by France with Fiji as Vice-Chair. In line with its 2019-2022 Strategy, a Group of Friends (GoF) has been established to reach out to, disseminate information and provide a tool for engagement with States interested in disaster displacement. This was the second meeting of the GoF, and the first such meeting in New York. It was co-chaired by the EU and the Kingdom of Morocco. The GoF will convene biannually in Geneva and biannually in New York. A presentation on the PDD is attached to these minutes. More information on the PDD can be found on [www.disasterdisplacement.org](http://www.disasterdisplacement.org).

### 1. Welcome and introductory remarks

Morocco, in its capacity as co-chair, opened the meeting, welcomed participants and explained that the establishment of this GoF was part of the strategy of the Steering Group of the PDD in order to increase awareness on the topic of disaster displacement, disseminate information about the PDD and its work, and provide tools for member states interested in disaster displacement. The GoF is intended to convene four times per year, twice in Geneva and twice in New York, as an open-ended and non-binding group and with the EU and Morocco as co-chairs in both cities. In New York, the PDD is not as well-known as in Geneva and the GoF is intended to change that.

### 2. Presentation of the Platform on Disaster Displacement

The Envoy of the PDD Chair, Professor Walter Kaelin, gave an overview of the PDD and its work.

He presented the background for the creation of the PDD (the follow-up to the Nansen Initiative) to address one of the biggest humanitarian challenges, namely disaster displacement. In 2018 more than 17 million people were displaced due to sudden-onset disasters and this number is only expected to increase. East Asia and the Pacific are the hardest hit, followed by South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Many are displaced for short periods, most remain in their own country, some cross borders. Numbers of the last six months show that disaster displacement is happening all over the world. Figures for slow onset disaster based displacement would need to be added but are difficult to get. There are still data and knowledge gaps regarding the numbers and protection needs of disaster displaced persons, hence the importance of the PDD and need for action by member states in this regard.

He explained how disaster displacement has been conceptualised following seven regional inter-governmental consultations around the world gathering effective practices and laying the foundation of the Nansen Initiative Protection Agenda (endorsed by 109 member states) toolbox approach which States can now use as reference to implement targeted action preventing and addressing disaster displacement.

The PDD was created in the context of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and continues the implementation of the recommendations of the Protection Agenda, which can be seen as a toolbox on disaster displacement, and aims to strengthen protection of disaster displaced persons, and to prevent or reduce disaster displacement risks in countries of origin.

Prof. Kaelin noted that several factors play into disaster displacement, including the combination of hazard, exposure, vulnerability, including the quality of governance. Disasters, not just hazards, trigger displacement. He laid out several options to mitigate these factors: climate mitigation can reduce hazard; migration as adaptation or planned relocation can reduce exposure; climate change adaptation, DRR and resilience building can reduce vulnerability. On top of that it is critical to protect internally or cross-border displaced persons. In short, the toolbox approach offers many policy options to (1) help people stay; (2) help people move out of harm's way; and (3) help those displaced.

He situated the work of the PDD in the intersection of global policy processes, such as the Sendai Framework, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the two Global Compacts (GCM/GCR) and the recently established High Level Panel on IDPs, while highlighting the four strategic priorities of the PDD until 2022: (1) Support integrated implementation of global policy frameworks; (2) Promote policy and normative development; (3) Facilitate exchange of knowledge and strengthen capacity; and (4) Strengthen evidence and data.

### **3. Ways how States can engage with the PDD and on Disaster Displacement**

The EU, in its capacity as co-chair of the GoF, laid out four ways in which States can engage with the PDD and on disaster displacement, going forward:

- Creating partnerships and engagement by reaching out to other States and partners who have not been involved so far;
- Promoting key messages through global fora, events, and processes, by referring to PDD key messages and information material in statements, and by attending PDD public and side events;
- Engaging in regional efforts by partnering with neighbouring states and engaging regionally in meetings and projects with the support of the PDD, for instance in the Pacific, the Americas, Africa and Southeast Asia where the PDD already runs projects or engages in activities;
- Addressing knowledge gaps by investing in closing the data gap regarding disaster displacement; the PDD Advisory Committee's work in this regard and the African Union's data collection observatory based in Rabat in Morocco are good starting points.

#### 4. Questions and Answers

France (as Chair of the PDD) welcomed the launch of the GoF in New York and outlined the priorities of its chairmanship of the PDD: (1) better integrate PDD in relevant policy frameworks (UNFCCC, Sendai, Global Compacts); (2) integrate the PDD in regions and regional processes; (3) Strengthen engagement of states and their mobilisation in support of the PDD; and (4) strengthen engagement of civil society and development actors (beyond IFI's).

The United Kingdom stressed the importance of discussing disaster displacement in New York, referred to the upcoming COP26 in Glasgow which will focus, as one of four priorities, on resilience and adaptation, and stressed the need of further strengthening anticipatory finance and the use data towards that end. Prof. Kaelin responded that the GoF is well placed to disseminate messages on the importance of anticipatory finance and a good forum to have discussions in an informal way.

Norway and Switzerland emphasised the importance of creating synergies with other related GoF in New York (e.g. High Level Panel on IDPs, DRR, Climate and Security). Prof. Kaelin agreed with the need to break silos/build synergies with other relevant GoF to ensure policy coherence. GoF have an important role in translating policy into concrete action. Joint meetings of relevant GoFs would be useful to exchange information and ensure coherence.

Ireland underscored the importance of a regional approach, referring to its own cooperation with SIDS on DRR and prevention strategies.

Bangladesh reflected on the future role of IHL in protection disaster displaced persons, stressing that it will in the future likely also include the protection of 'climate refugees' and wanted to know the professor's opinion on this. Prof. Kaelin responded that the PDD has no position on this. He agreed that probably in the future there will be IHL underpinning disaster displacement (which will likely start at the regional level).

Mexico expressed its commitment to actively participate in this GoF, both in Geneva and in New York, stressed that the PDD should be field-led, highlighted the PDDs accomplishments through the partnerships it has established, the effectiveness of its toolkit approach and its positive results, and expressed hope that the GoF will be able to take away some of the sensitivities that surround the PDD in New York discussions, and wanted to know the professor's insight into challenges and opportunities that disaster displacement poses to UNDS reform. Prof. Kaelin stressed that the RCs will have the important role of ensuring policy coherence across the different silos.

The United Arab Emirates stated it is happy to be part of the GoF, and expressed support to the PDD, particularly its work on anticipatory finance.

Germany highlighted its strong support to the PDD from the start, the importance of the GCM with its references to climate and environmental factors, stressed it is also active on the topic of climate and security in the UN Security Council, and called on others to diversify the funding of the PDD.

Finland emphasised the need to strengthen robust early warning systems at the country level and the importance for this GoF to work closely with the meteorological and scientific community to ensure the best data, and referred to the impact of a recent ruling of the Human Rights Committee Council on a case on climate-related displacement. Both UNHCR and Prof Kaelin stressed that the ruling ultimately reflected long-standing human rights jurisprudence according to which people must not be sent back to situations of immediate threat to their right to life which could also be the case under specific circumstances yet to be defined with regard to impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. This is reason why there is a distinction between refugees and disaster displacement. With refugees, the own government is often not cooperating, for disaster displacement the opposite is often the case.

Afghanistan highlighted that disasters are often only one of several factors (e.g. poverty, fragility, conflict) leading to displacement. Prof. Kaelin agreed, also referring to situations in Ethiopia and Somalia where people are displaced by conflicts and droughts. He stressed again the importance of a coherent approach. He highlighted that the PDDs work focuses on disaster displacement, but that the GoF is about creating synergies.

IOM and UNHCR (Standing Invitees to the PDD Steering Group) explained their work related to disaster displacement, with IOM highlighting several of its projects in the field (in the Pacific and in West Africa) in which it works closely with the PDD, and UNHCR expressing full support to the PDDs four key objectives and stressing that disaster displacement rarely takes place in isolation: high fragility, vulnerability and conflict are often other factors at play (e.g. in the Sahel); climate factors are often exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. UNCR stressed the importance of better implementing the Nexus and argued that UNDS reform will give Resident Coordinators a critical role in making sure that issues such as disaster displacement are integrated into national development plans.

OCHA highlighted the UN Secretary-General's annual report on natural disasters (which refers to disaster displacement) and the importance of further strengthening the normative framework on disaster displacement through the negotiation of annual resolutions in New York (e.g. Omnibus, DRR, IDPs, Natural Disasters, Climate, etc.). The GoF could have an active role towards this end.

In closing, the co-chairs encouraged member states to engage on disaster displacement and with the PDD and refer to the PDD webpage and newsletter for updated information on upcoming events as well as policy messaging.

End./