Your Excellencies,
Representatives of Member States
Representatives of UN and other international organisations, humanitarian partners, other stakeholders, CSOs and experts
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you in my capacity as the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons. I wish to thank the UAE for hosting this important annual event and the DISAB (Scientific and Advisory Board) for the opportunity to be part of this panel.

In the opening speeches this morning, we have heard about the importance of bringing attention to ALL people on the move – refugees, migrants and also internally displaced persons. The focus of this panel is therefore very relevant for the work of my mandate. Bringing visibility to the continuum of displacement - from internal to cross-border and vice-versa - and emphasising the need for a continuum of protection and solutions for all those forcibly displaced is part of parcel of the big picture.

I would like to focus on three key aspects relating to this:

1. Importance of addressing root causes of forced displacement to support solutions

First of all, I would like to stress the emphasis that the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration put on the need for dedicated efforts to address the root causes of forced displacement, so as to minimise and prevent the risk of it happening, and also as an effective way to achieve sustainable solutions for those forcibly displaced.

Many of us know that the majority of the 68.5 million people forcibly displaced by conflict and violence globally remain inside their countries as internally displaced persons (IDPs). This figure does not include those displaced by other human-made disasters or disasters brought on by natural hazards in the context of climate change. Conflicts and environmental change also constitute the root causes of movements internally as well as across borders.

It is clear that by addressing causes and drivers of internal displacement, Member States and their partners are also contributing to addressing large refugee and migration flows. Objective 2 of the Global Compact of Migration on conditions in countries of origin is relevant to this, as well as objective 4 of the Global Compact for Refugees that aim to support conditions favourable to voluntary repatriation in countries of origin. This can be achieved precisely through both
addressing the root causes of forced displacement and by removing obstacles to the return and reintegration of refugees where refugees are concerned.

Political and security cooperation, diplomacy, development and the promotion and protection of human rights are therefore absolutely key to preventing and avoiding conditions that might lead to displacement of persons, as well as resolving protracted displacement situations.

In many areas where refugees, returnees and IDPs live side by side, this constitutes a great opportunity for holistic and integrated action - in support of national development plans and in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - which may include support for livelihood and economic opportunities and measures to address housing, land and property issues for all those forcibly displaced, including IDPs and host communities, based on their needs.

2. Global Compacts’ approaches are equally applicable to IDP situations

The New York Declaration that preceded the two Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration explicitly raised the importance of the issue of internal displacement in the spectrum of migratory and refugee flows. And while the two Global Compacts did not specifically focus on IDPs, the key approaches at their core are equally applicable and useful in contexts of internal displacement. I’m referring in particular to:

- government leadership and ownership, where possible through a whole-of-government approach;
- closer collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, with development programmes and policies that are to bring direct benefits to IDPs as well as host communities, and the mobilization of predictable international responses consistent with national development strategies and aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- participation of IDPs and other affected communities in relevant decision-making processes, including women, persons with disabilities, and youth;
- a whole-of-society approach based on broad multi-stakeholder partnerships that include local authorities and other local actors, civil society organisations, the private sector, faith-based actors, National Human Rights Institutions and academics.

The emphasis on improving data and supporting evidence-based responses including by strengthen national data collection systems is also extremely relevant in situations of internal displacement. For this reason, the UN Statistical Commission had convened an Expert Group on Refugee and IDPs Statistic (EGRIS) whose work is in progress with many national statistical offices and to which my mandate contributes.

All of these areas for engagement, at international, regional and national levels are essentially at the core of continuing essentiality and implementation of constructive and enabling policies, operations and responses to internal displacement and the needs and rights of internally displaced persons at all these levels.

As stated, the New York Declaration in paragraph 20 explicitly notes the need for reflection on effective strategies to ensure adequate protection and assistance for internally displaced persons and to prevent and reduce such displacement.

In line with this and the 2017 UN General Assembly’s IDP resolution - that specifically called on Member States, myself as the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs, relevant UN agencies and other stakeholders to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement - I spearheaded with UNHCR and UNOCHA a multi-stakeholder GP20 Plan of Action to advance prevention, protection and solutions for internally displaced people (2018-2020). This GP20 Plan of Action is inextricably linked as well to this year’s 10th anniversary of the African Union Kampala Convention - which led the AU to declare this year as the African Year for Refugees, Returnees and IDPs.

This Plan is a useful framework for promoting more inclusive, coherent and strategic action among all stakeholders engaged on internal displacement no matter the cause, primarily at the national and local level. It focuses on national sovereignty as responsibility of States to reduce and resolve internal displacement and it puts emphasis on ongoing constructive dialogue at the national and regional levels and sharing of experiences among affected countries, creating a more fertile ground to address the issue of internal displacement at the global level.

The GP20 initiative is meant to provide useful evidence of effective practices as we reflect toward more effective strategies to deal with internal displacement, including through a High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, particularly around the four priorities of the Plan of Action. These are:

• engaging IDPs in decision-making processes that affect them;
• promoting, developing and implementing national frameworks to prevent and address internal displacement;
• enhancing the quality of data and analysis on internal displacement; and,
• addressing protracted displacement while driving solutions for IDPs.

Following the successful launch of the Plan of Action on April 17, 2018 and the numerous ongoing activities in its support at international, regional and national levels over the past seven months, we are actually encouraged by the immense interest and involvement by Member States, UN agencies, civil society and academic institutions in these collaborative efforts to effect national implementation of humanitarian, development and human rights initiatives on the ground. The Steering Group, for example, is expanding as States are signing up (originally composed of Honduras, Uganda and Austria; now including Afghanistan, Colombia, Denmark, Ethiopia, Fiji, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Ukraine and the USA). Over 30 focal points at national levels, in countries that have internal displacement populations are actively engaged and led either by the government ministries or UN country teams.

It is important to note that this is a clear example of the actual implementation of multi-stakeholder collaboration in support of IDP participation, IDP law, policy and data responses as well as solutions to internal and protected displacement. This is also a good example of the bottom-up approaches highlighting good practices and improved responses to IDP issues that we hope will
resonate with the directions of the international community in its much valued solidarity, embodied in DIHAD, and global responses to some of the most vulnerable “people on the move” – the internally displaced.

I look forward to the discussions. Thank you very much.