
Press Release

NRC and IDMC welcome African Union convention on IDPs

GENEVA, 23 October 2009 – The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and its Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) welcome the African Union’s adoption of the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. The Convention was adopted in Kampala today at the AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs in Africa.

“The African Union is the first regional organisation worldwide to adopt a legally binding instrument to protect the rights of internally displaced people,” said NRC Secretary General Elisabeth Rasmusson. “The Convention adopted by the heads of state in Kampala today is the opportunity for the continent to be at the forefront of ensuring that the rights of displaced populations are upheld.”

Similarly, 40 years ago, the African Union was the first regional organisation to adopt a refugee convention, committing states parties to deal with the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.

While the continent of Africa still hosted 11.6 million people internally displaced by conflict or violence at the end of 2008, nearly 50 per cent of the worldwide total, for the first time in a decade this number had fallen on a year-on-year basis.

15 African state governments must now ratify the Convention for it to come into force. By so doing they will commit to preventing arbitrary displacement, to the protection of the rights of displaced people, and to lasting solutions to displacement which recognise people’s rights to voluntarily return home but also to settle in areas of displacement or elsewhere in their country.

“We encourage all states concerned to ratify the Convention swiftly,” Rasmusson said, “and we call upon states and international organisations to promote and support its ratification and implementation throughout the continent.”

Notes for Editors:

The Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), established by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring internal displacement worldwide. For information contact Kate Half, Head of IDMC, on 0041 (0)22 799 0703 or at kate.half@nrc.ch.

For further general or country-specific information, go to www.internal-displacement.org.