

37th Session of the Congress, Strasbourg, 29 October 2019

Speaking notes for co-rapporteur Marianne HOLLINGER (Switzerland, ILDG)

512 words = 4,5 minutes.

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The role of local and regional governments in protecting internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Dear Colleagues,

I will now present the recommendation.

In our report we talked about the services local and regional authorities must deliver to IDPs, but we also tried to emphasize the fact that our approach to IDPs should be based on respect for human rights.

What do we mean by this?

It is an unfortunate fact that displacement of large groups creates conditions which are favourable to discrimination, exclusion, a disregard for the rule of law and different forms of violence.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe underlined that the human rights and humanitarian needs of IDPs should be a central point in all international efforts to monitor and mediate those conflicts.

These people who were forced to leave their regions, cities, villages but they remain citizens of the State in which they live. Therefore, they should benefit from the solidarity of their fellow citizens and their public authorities.

To our regret, the reality does not always live up to these principles. IDPs are currently facing administrative obstacles which prevent their full inclusion. They do not always have equal access to basic services such as health, housing and employment.

Local and regional authorities are on the front line working with IDPs. When they carry out their duty and responsibilities to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to IDPs within their jurisdiction and provide services, they need supported from their governments.

Sometimes this assistance, financial or otherwise, is lacking. As a result, there are still significant administrative, social and economic challenges involving lack of administrative documents, information or assistance.

In our draft Recommendation we focus our attention to four main points:

- First of all, member States are asked to respect the rights of IDPs, who should enjoy their rights as citizens of their countries, but also and above all, as human beings. National governments should assemble all resources to provide them with protection and humanitarian assistance in their new environments, and at the same time, guarantee their right to return to their place of origin in safety and with dignity.
- Secondly, we draw attention of governments on the necessity of providing more flexible legislation that allows IDPs to fully exercise their voting rights, as these are a natural starting point for a successful long-term integration in the life of their community. Besides, governments are asked to provide legislative support to policy development aiming at improving the living conditions of IDPs.
- Governments should also raise awareness on the plight of IDPs and build a positive discourse regarding their situation in order to achieve social cohesion and prevent a discriminatory discourse.
- Governments are asked to cooperate with local and regional authorities in the planification, implementation and follow-up of initiatives and policies regarding IDPs.

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This is needed in order to make sure that the financial support allocated to local and regional authorities is transparent, fair, and based on declared needs.

- Finally, member States are invited to develop cooperation at the international level so that member states can share good practices.

Dear Colleagues, I kindly invite you to adopt this recommendation.

Thank you for your attention.