

**PLACE**

Juba

**DATE**

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## UNHCR Welcomes the Participation of Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons in South Sudan's National Dialogue Conference

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes the inclusion of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and spontaneous refugee returnees in the National Dialogue Conference, which began today in Juba, South Sudan, and will last until November 14.

With nearly 2.2 million South Sudanese refugees hosted in neighbouring countries and another 1.6 million persons displaced within the country, ensuring that their voices and views continue to be part of this dialogue is essential for the inclusiveness of the process.

"Refugees and IDPs can and do contribute to the resolution of the conflicts that uprooted them. Involving them in this National Dialogue with their compatriots helps to build long-lasting peace, including through durable solutions to displacement and improving conditions in the areas of return," explains newly arrived UNHCR Representative Arafat Jamal. 'On this, my first day in South Sudan, I am heartened to see South Sudanese from all walks of life working together to forge greater harmony through honest and focused interchange.'

On the event's agenda are thematic discussions on the economy, governance, security and social cohesion. Participation of forcibly displaced to this Conference provides them with a platform where to address issues affecting all South Sudanese, ensuring they play a central role in the revitalized peace efforts along with fellow citizens.

While in person attendance would have been preferred, the various travel requirements related to the COVID-19 pandemic did not allow for this possibility at this time. To facilitate inclusion of refugee and IDPs' voices and views in the National Dialogue, UNHCR has organised internet access for a dozen participants to participate virtually from six asylum countries, namely the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, and 28 IDP and IDP returnees across South Sudan, in close coordination with the National Dialogue Conference's organizers.

This comes after UNHCR partnership with the National Dialogue Sub-Committee for Refugees and International Outreach, formed in 2017 to facilitate the participation of South Sudanese residing outside the country. With this aim, the sub-committee travelled to four countries of asylum, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia in 2019, providing South Sudanese refugees with the opportunity to contribute towards this important part of the peace process. IDPs were also included in several grass-rooted consultations held in different South Sudan locations ahead of this Conference.

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