

**Forty-ninth session (1996)\***

**General recommendation XXII on article 5 of the Convention  
on refugees and displaced persons**

*The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,*

*Conscious* of the fact that foreign military, non-military and/or ethnic conflicts have resulted in massive flows of refugees and the displacement of persons on the basis of ethnic criteria in many parts of the world,

*Considering* that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination proclaim that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set out therein, without distinction of any kind, in particular as to race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin,

*Recalling* the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees as the main source of the international system for the protection of refugees in general,

1. *Draws the attention* of States parties to article 5 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination as well as the Committee's general recommendation XX (48) on article 5, and reiterates that the Convention obliges States parties to prohibit and eliminate racial discrimination in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms;

2. *Emphasizes* in this respect that:

(a) All such refugees and displaced persons have the right freely to return to their homes of origin under conditions of safety;

(b) States parties are obliged to ensure that the return of such refugees and displaced persons is voluntary and to observe the principle of non-refoulement and non-expulsion of refugees;

(c) All such refugees and displaced persons have, after their return to their homes of origin, the right to have restored to them property of which they were deprived in the course of the conflict and to be compensated appropriately for any such property that cannot be restored to them. Any commitments or statements relating to such property made under duress are null and void;

(d) All such refugees and displaced persons have, after their return to their homes of origin, the right to participate fully and equally in public affairs at all levels and to have equal access to public services and to receive rehabilitation assistance.

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\* Contained in document A/51/18.