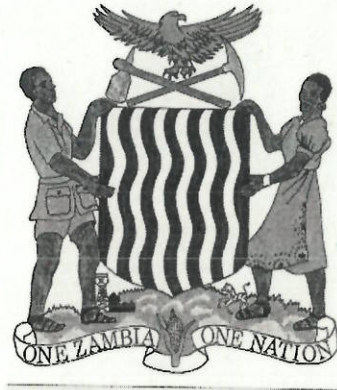


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REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Statement by the Minister of Home Affairs,
Hon. Stephen Kampyongo MP, at the 70th
Session of the Executive Committee of the
High Commissioner's Programme (EXCOM),

Geneva, 7th October 2019

Thank you Chairperson,

Excellency, High Commissioner,

Honourable Ministers Present,

Heads of Delegations,

I am honoured to represent the Government of the Republic of Zambia before this distinguished assembly and to convey greetings from His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu. Allow me to begin by commending the High Commissioner for his passionate and enlightening statement which has provided an insight of the commendable work of the UNHCR.

Zambia also wishes to commend Zimbabwe, speaking on behalf of the African Group, for highlighting the bold and progressive step taken by High Commissioner Grandi to bring decision making closer to the areas of operation through the creation of the Regional bureaux. Zambia has benefited greatly from this decision as demonstrated by the visit to Lusaka by the new Southern Africa Bureau Director, Mr Valentin Tapsoba, in March, 2019.

Chairperson,

Zambia currently hosts over 84, 500 persons of concern, including more than 61, 300 refugees and over 23, 200 former refugees from Angola and Rwanda. 76% of the refugee population is from the neighbouring

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and lives in refugee settlements and urban areas.

In the settlements, the Government has allocated more than 106, 000 hectares of land to refugees in addition to maintaining an open door asylum policy that has, over the past fifty years, ensured that thousands of refugees are received, protected and assisted in safety and dignity.

Chairperson,

This is a clear testimony of our country's long standing commitment to implementing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) which started with the development oriented Zambia Initiative in the early 2000s. The CRRF in Zambia has continued to promote and improve the dignity and livelihood of refugees, anchored on the achievements of the local integration programme. For many years, refugees have been part of Zambia's national agenda, benefiting from a whole of Government approach in the delivery of services. In this connection, the Government spends at least 2 million United States Dollars per annum in personnel emoluments for its officers providing services in refugee settlements. At the end of last year, the Government provided 1.6 million Euros for the issuance of machine readable Conventional Travel Documents to enable refugees to travel

out of the country as a way of promoting self-reliance, through jobs and investment.

In addition, the Government will soon come up with a refugee policy to strengthen the implementation of the Refugees Act of 2017, guaranteeing greater rights for refugees. We are also actively considering the request by the UNHCR to lift the reservations made to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. These efforts, Chairperson, are a demonstration of our Government's desire to address the challenges that are inherent in providing solutions for refugees in line with the Global Compact on Refugees.

Chairperson,

In the spirit of burden and responsibility sharing, there is need for concrete support for our Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. For the CRRF to take root and succeed in Zambia, the international community should match the resources that the Government of Zambia has put at the disposal of refugees for both protracted and new caseloads. It is important for both humanitarian and development actors, to honour their commitments to assist the Government to improve living conditions for refugees in the settlements, particularly in providing education as well as promoting livelihoods and self-reliance.

Chairperson,

Zambia has had several challenges in the attempt to bring closure to protracted caseloads of Angolan and Rwandan former refugees, of which despite our efforts to make exceptions by varying our policies and regulations, has remained outstanding. The successful completion of this initiative will only be possible with the support of the concerned stakeholders. As a Government, we remain committed to continuing with the local integration of the former refugees and will maintain our contribution of 50% of the costs of the issuance of residence permits, while the other 50% is expected to be met by our cooperating partners.

Chairperson,

Now, allow me to address this august house on the main theme of this year's Executive Committee;

Zambia wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the UNHCR Global Action Plan, 2014 to 2024 and the Ibelong Campaign to End Statelessness. In this regard, the country's legislation is, to a great extent, compliant with international standards. Our legal framework already guarantees protection of a person's right to nationality and as a safeguard against statelessness, the Republican Constitution provides for the acquisition of citizenship by foundlings and dual citizenship. Our laws also guarantee equal rights for women to change and retain their nationality and confer it to their children. These, Chairperson,

are only but a few examples of how we are working to prevent statelessness.

Zambia's commitment is further augmented by our membership to three (3) regional blocks, allowing us to advance our Statelessness agenda on multiple fronts, particularly through the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (IGCLR). Therefore, in keeping with the Brazzaville Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness, we have formed a National Task Force on the Eradication of Statelessness. We have also completed a draft National Action Plan which identifies legislative and administrative gaps, and charts a clear path to determine, manage and implement policies to protect stateless persons and those at risk.

Of utmost importance, Chairperson, is the ongoing process for Zambia to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. This process has reached an advanced stage. Soon the matter will be presented to Cabinet and subsequently to Parliament before the end of 2019, paving the way for us to accede to the Convention by 2020.

Chairperson,

The Government of the Republic of Zambia also pledges to complete the issuance of the permits to all former refugees, domesticate the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, support regional initiatives for Statelessness and strengthen birth registration. In this

regard, Zambia is privileged to host the 5th Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Lusaka from 14th to 18th October, 2019. We are confident that this Conference will build momentum among African nations and strengthen their common desire to issue nationality documents to every person on the continent, leaving no one behind.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to express the Government's profound gratitude to High Commissioner Grandi and your office in Lusaka for the work and commitment that the UNHCR has shown in our operation. We look forward to welcoming you, Your Excellency, High Commissioner, to Zambia next week.

I thank you all for your kind attention.