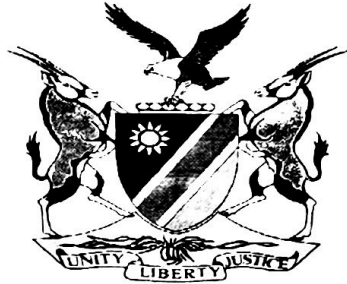


REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PENDA NAANDA,
AMBASSADOR/PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE
OCCASION OF THE FIRST GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

17 DECEMBER 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson

1. It is a great honour for me to address the First Ever Global Refugee Forum on behalf of the Government and people of Namibia, who live and interact with refugees on a daily basis. Namibia continues to welcome asylum seekers and refugees, and will endeavour to continue creating an enabling environment in which they may reside, and have access to opportunities aimed at realizing their potential within her borders.
2. Therefore, Namibia has submitted concrete pledges and contributions aimed at advancing the objectives outlined on the Global Compact. Namibia believes that these pledges are instrumental in fostering social cohesion with tangible benefits for both refugees and host communities.
3. Namibia continues to provide primary and secondary education to asylum seekers and refugees for free, as per our national education system, and allocate needed resources for teacher's salaries, teaching and learning materials. Similarly, the provision of health services in the Settlement is availed to asylum seekers and refugees for free, and government has allocated resources to cover health personnel's salaries, medicines and equipment. Equally, Namibia is taking specific attention to the older refugees who find themselves in situations of risk and displacement, hence, protection and support of their rights is imperative.
4. The Government has allocated land for settlement and livelihood, and acquired Identification cards and travel documents at a cost of N\$ 475,000 (four hundred and seventy-five thousand Namibia dollars) and N\$ 3,300,000 (three point three million Namibia dollars) respectively, to enable refugees to travel without hindrance. Similarly, employed refugees are allowed to work, own businesses, study, own properties, move freely within the country, have access to courts, have access to amenities including sports activities and they enjoy the protection of their human rights.

5. Namibia has taken a bold decision to fully integrate former Angolan refugees within the communities they have chosen, and those who could not afford to pay for their Permanent Residence Permit; the Government has exempted them from payment.
6. Equally, the process of returning home by former Namibian refugees from the Republic of Botswana was conducted in the spirit of safety and dignity. The Government of Namibia provided building materials, three-month rations and cash grant for the returnees to settle in a dignified manner in their original communities and families. An amount of Ten Million Seven Hundred Forty-one thousand, One Hundred and One Namibian Dollars (N\$ 10 741 101.00) was allocated to facilitate their arrival and settling.
7. In addition Namibia has taken steps to continuously monitor their integration and support them where necessary. In terms of national documents, a special programme has been devised to make sure that they are issued with the necessary documents. I would also like to mention that, students who were supposed to sit for their final examination have done so, as per the arrangement between the Governments of Namibia and Botswana.
8. To this end, we commend the people and Government of the Republic of Botswana for the invaluable political, social and economic support and cooperation afforded to our people over the years.
9. Namibia is committed to end statelessness within its borders by 2023, and an Action Plan to eradicate stateless persons is being internalized, and will be implemented as from 2020. Equally, the country is ready to accede to both the 1954 and 1961 UN Conventions. Similarly, Namibia has taken positive steps towards the ratification of the 1969 OAU Convention on Refugees in Africa, and the 2009 AU Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internal Displaced Persons in Africa.
10. Noting that the Global Compact on Refugees calls for the facilitation of the participation of all refugees in the Global Refugee Forum in the spirit of no one being left behind,

Namibia was greatly distressed to have learned that the participation of refugees from the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in this forum was not facilitated in accordance with the GCR.

11. The people of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic are once again being left behind. Namibia, having walked the path that is now being traversed by the Sahrawi people is fully conscious of the uphill battle and sense of isolation that they endure. As such, it behoves Namibia to implore this forum to address this injustice and ensure that all refugees enjoy equal access to the assistance that is being pledged on this platform.
12. Lastly Mr. Chairperson, I would like to point out that as we go about the noble work of responding to the immediate needs of refugees, we should not forget that this is merely a treating of the symptoms. Let us strive by all means, as stakeholders endeavouring to share this great responsibility, to deal with the root causes that lead to the creation of refugees and IDPs around the world.

I thank you.