



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

**THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA TO THE SWISS CONFEDERATION AND
THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE, WTO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENEVA**

**Statement delivered by Hon. Minister Seyaka Sonko of the Republic of The Gambia at
the 73rd Session of UNHCR EXCOM in Geneva, under General Debate agenda item 3,
Monday 10th October 2022**

**Mr. Chairperson
The High Commissioner of UNHCR
Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen**

At the outset, the delegation of The Gambia congratulates the High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi on the extension of his mandate by the General Assembly to 31 December 2025 and commends him for the statement that highlighted the challenges that contribute greatly to the displacement of communities and people from their homes. I take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson and wish him well in his leadership in steering the 73rd EXCOM Session.

Chairperson

The Gambia aligned itself with the statement delivered by the Republic of Chad on behalf of the Africa Group. My delegation notes the progress that UNHCR has made in its work, despite all the difficulties, and welcomes the financial and technical support provided by UNHCR partners in implementing its strategies to ensure the well-being of displaced populations and affected people, including the refugees.

Excellencies

The Gambia also shares concerns about the growing number of human rights violations, armed conflicts, terrorism and climate change that are alarming the

displacement of communities and people from their homes around the world and on our continent, Africa.

Therefore, our delegation would like to reiterate its call for greater support for UNHCR's humanitarian work and to help reduce the latest estimate of more than 100 million displaced people worldwide and the number of internally displaced persons, which is estimated at 89.3 million by the end of 2021.

Chairperson,

As forced displacement, including armed conflicts and climate change crises, has a disparate impact on affected populations and communities, it is women, children, and the elderly who are most vulnerable to such situations. We encourage UNHCR and its partners to continue to support people and communities and provide technical assistance to Member States in their work to prevent human suffering related to forced displacement. Countries, particularly developing and least developed countries, should be encouraged and supported in their humanitarian work to help restore the dignity of refugees, internally displaced persons, and asylum seekers, as overwhelming numbers of these populations face host countries, exacerbating the humanitarian emergency in these countries even before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Excellencies

The Gambia continues to host refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and other persons of concern from ECOWAS and other regions. As of September 2022, the number of refugee and asylum seekers in the Gambia was 5542, most of whom live in rural areas, and refugees live peacefully with the host communities and participate in social and other development activities.

Although the outlook for 2022 appears quite promising with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is still a need for developing countries to have an uninterrupted supply of Covid-19 vaccines due to the unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons in these countries, particularly in African countries. The Gambia has not recorded significant numbers of Covid-19 cases among refugees, asylum seekers, and other persons of concern to UNHCR in The Gambia as part of its COVID-19 control programmes.

However, in January 2022 alone, we have seen an influx of an estimated 1117 registered displaced persons and asylum seekers from the Southern Region of Senegal (Casamance) as a result of the conflict in that region. As such we would welcome increased support from partners to complete Covid – 19 vaccinations in country and for its refugees and internally displaced people.

Excellencies

The Government of The Gambia, through the National Refugee Commission, will continue to adopt policies and programmes to promote the humanitarian rights of refugees and other vulnerable persons in both urban and rural communities to ensure their safety, well-being through service delivery, and peaceful coexistence in The Gambia. Also, our national laws and policies in education and health do not discriminate against refugees based on their status and equally protect them from sexual exploitation, abuse including asylum seekers, and other persons of concern.

We will continue the work already underway to strengthen our institutional capacity in collaboration with UNHCR and other partners to achieve the 2024 goal of ending statelessness. The Government of The Gambia is aware of the need to address the potential risk of statelessness and is seeking support from its partners to improve the national framework to this end.

Chairperson.

in closing, my delegation would like to remind this session that our countries, especially the Least Developed Countries, are going through turbulent times when it comes to ensuring stability in the prices of food and commodities for their populations and likewise for their refugees and those in need. Affordable food and commodity supplies for the populations of these countries should be considered as humanitarian imperative, and these countries must be supported to ensure food security for all.

I Thank you

