



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

MINISTRY OF RELIEF, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND REFUGEES

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STATEMENT BY HON. ENG. HILARY ONEK, MINISTER OF RELIEF, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND REFUGEES OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA AT THE 69TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, 1-5 OCTOBER 2018

**High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Uganda is the largest refugee hosting country in Africa, with over 1.5 million refugees. Uganda's refugee population has been growing since 2013, and today, we experience a daily average arrival of 300 asylum seekers mainly from South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. The refugee population is approximately 3.5% of the total country population.

Uganda's refugee response is carried out in partnership with UNHCR and various implementing partners operating in the country. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all our partners, for the tremendous support towards Uganda's refugee response. We commend all staff in the field, national and international, for their tireless efforts in the same regard.

Uganda has continued to maintain an open door policy to refugees based on the traditional African hospitality of not turning away anybody who is running to us for safety. This policy has been maintained irrespective of the numerous development challenges the country is facing as a least developing country.

The Government has integrated refugee issues into the National Planning Framework and Second National Development Plan through the Settlement

Transformation Agenda as the national arching framework through which, all interventions towards refugee protection and management are anchored.

The Government operates a settlement approach to refugee protection and management as opposed to a camp policy and guarantees an array of rights to refugees to preserve their dignity. The rights include freedom of movement, right to employment, to start business, right to education and health. We also provide refugees with a plot of land to enable them put up shelter and for farming. This inclusive refugee policy empowers refugees to become economically self-reliant while granting them many of the same privileges that nationals enjoy except, the right to participate in our politics.

Our policy is lauded as the most generous in the world. All host countries bear a high burden in the overall international refugee response, however the settlement approach places a higher burden on the host country and in particular on the host communities' infrastructure and environment. Therefore our expectation is that due cognizance of this reality should be made and reflected in the budgetary processes of the UNHCR. To date funding to the country remains at about 18% of the needs available, leaving about 82% of needs unfunded. This continued underfunding to refugee programs in the country requires urgent review.

We urge the international community to renew its efforts to support the settlement policy, increase investments to promote peaceful co-existence and ensure sustainability of this approach. The generosity of Ugandans should be matched by proportionate support from the international community, in order to guarantee continued public support for this policy in the future. The status quo, which is characterized by dwindling international support for refugee response in the country, could form the basis of a policy review.

As a pioneer country, Uganda has rolled out the implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to ensure a whole of society approach to refugee protection and management, to guarantee asylum space, ensure peaceful co-existence and provide humanitarian and development needs for both refugees and host communities. A multi-stakeholder Steering Group of the CRRF Secretariat has been established

under the leadership of the Government of Uganda, UNHCR and other key development partners.

Specific response plans in line with the priorities identified by the Steering Group have been developed. These include the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities recently launched on 14th September 2018. Other response plans include health, water and environment, livelihood and resilience. These Strategic Response plans are aligned to the Second National Development Plan, the Settlement Transformation Agenda and other regional, continental and global refugee response declarations, protocols and conventions.

As a demonstration of leadership and commitment to the CRRF and the whole of society approach, but due to continued underfunding, the Government of Uganda secured a 50 million USD loan from the World Bank under the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) to invest in socio-economic infrastructure, livelihoods and environment in the host communities. Negotiations are underway for additional funding under the project.

However this is not sustainable, development assistance towards refugee response should be additional to humanitarian assistance. This should not affect the amount of humanitarian assistance towards refugee response, as it would only end up increasing our debt burden as developing state.

International solidarity is a fundamental principle essential for international refugee response. The burden for refugees should not only be left to be shouldered by a few countries neighboring crisis areas. Rather, the international community should demonstrate their commitment and solidarity with refugees and host communities by providing adequate multi-year and flexible funding for the response plans to address the needs of both refugees and host communities. We expect that the talk of equitable and predictable burden and responsibility sharing will become a reality for us a host country

Chairperson, the limited opportunities and stringent procedures for third country relocations continue to undermine the notion of burden sharing across the globe. In addition, continued instability in the region, and inadequate commitment on the part of the International Community to address the root

causes of conflicts continues to hamper voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin.

Therefore, we call upon the international community to increase slots for third country resettlement and shorten the procedures. In addition, we should all double efforts to address the root causes of conflict, in order to permanently address the causes of refugee flight and guarantee voluntary return.

We look forward to the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees later this year as a positive step towards the achievement more equitable responsibility and burden sharing. We are keen to see that the arrangements proposed in the draft compact for burden and responsibility as well as those for follow-up and review is implemented in a timely manner after the adoption of the Compact.

In Conclusion, Uganda will continue to fulfill its international obligation towards refugee protection and management, way above international standards. We therefore appeal for more financial and non-financial resources from the international community to enhance our capacity to meet the humanitarian and development needs of refugees and host communities.

For God and my Country
Thank you

Hon. Eng. Hilary Onek (MP)

MINISTER FOR RELIEF, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND REFUGEES.