



**SOUTH AFRICA'S STATEMENT AT THE
70TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER'S
PROGRAMME (EXCOM)**

**Delivered by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs
H.E. Mr.Njabulo NZUZA**

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SWITZERLAND, GENEVA

Chairperson, High Commissioner, Your excellencies.

South Africa aligns itself with the statement of the Africa Group as delivered by Ambassador Mushayavanhu from Zimbabwe which is the leader of the African Group.

The South African delegation would like to express its gratitude to the High Commissioner for his briefing, highlighting the global trends on forced displacement including current protection challenges experienced by displaced persons, amongst others.

Chairperson,

South Africa is pleased to participate in this high level mid-term review of the 10 year Global Action Plan to ending statelessness. Today we can all attest to the strides made by the international community through these initiatives such as the UNHCRs #IBelong Campaign aimed at ending statelessness by 2024.

Despite progress made on reducing statelessness, challenges still remain. These challenges are demonstrated by the millions of people that have been recognized as stateless. In order resolve

these challenges we must intensify our collaborative efforts to eradicate statelessness.

Chairperson, we continue to strengthen our civil registration procedures and processes to ensure that children, regardless of their parent's nationality, are timeously registered and therefore confirming their nationality at birth.

As part of our pledge to ending statelessness, South Africa is pleased to announce that it will continue to collaborate with its neighboring countries to promote civil registration in the region, and in this regard, call on the support of the UNHCR in the execution of this initiative. South Africa, in reaffirming the role of the African Union, will continue to champion this initiative at both the continental and regional levels.

Chairperson,

My delegation notes with concern that 85% of refugees globally continue to be hosted by developing countries. As highlighted in the Global Report of 2018, Africa as a continent hosts up to 20% of the global refugee population. It is also noteworthy to mention that South Africa is one of the top African countries hosting 65% of the

continent's refugees. The disproportionate burden and responsibility placed on poor countries is of particular concern. In this regard, we note with concern that the funding gap to meet ongoing operations continue to widen whilst the humanitarian needs remain high on the ground.

Chairperson,

South Africa has demonstrated its generosity by both continuously receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees since gaining its independence in 1994. This is more so because as a country we do not practice encampment of asylum seekers but do integration.

Despite being a developing nation with enormous challenges South Africa continues to commit huge resources towards its effort of meeting her international obligation. My country is home to just over 120 000 refugees and in 2018, a further 1500 persons were granted refugee status. In addition, my government is considering over 185 000 asylum seeker applications and this number continues to increase every year.

Chairperson, we are encouraged by the High Commissioner's call in his opening remarks aimed at discouraging economic migrants

from abusing the asylum regime. we propose that the UNHCR does work on how we can end the abuse of the asylum regime by economic immigrants as it stifles efforts to process asylum seeker applications thereby impacting negatively on genuine applicants.

We also call on countries to adhere to Human Rights instruments and guarantee their citizens full enjoyment of their rights. We believe this will drastically reduce asylum seekers, refugees and statelessness.

South Africa is proud to announce the roll out of the smart ID cards to refugees as part of our modernization program. The roll out is planned to commence by April 2020. This innovative system will ensure that refugees continue to enjoy rights like all South Africans including access to our social welfare system.

Furthermore, we wish to express our gratitude to the UNHCR for its collaboration with South Africa on the Implementation Plan aimed at reducing the backlog of asylum-seeking appeals. This initiative is expected to assist with the clearance of the backlog of over 140 000 appeal cases. In order to ensure the realisation of this initiative, South Africa has recognized the need to implement relevant amendments to its Refugee Act. These amendments are

meant to strengthen efficiencies in the overall status determination processes.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains a multicultural society that promotes interaction among people of different backgrounds, and remains an integral part of the African continent and the international community. We re-affirm our aspiration for a peaceful, vibrant and sustainable Africa. My country remains deeply committed to the ideals of Pan-African unity and solidarity.

Chairperson, the Government of South Africa and the people of my country continue to express solidarity and provide hospitality to those forcibly displaced from their countries, thus contributing to the principles of international refugee protection.

In conclusion Chairperson, my delegation is pleased to see you as the Chair of this 70th EXCOM and is confident that through your leadership this EXCOM will map a clear way forward toward ending statelessness.

I thank you.