

Deputy Minister for The  
Ministry of Home Affairs Tanzania

**Chairperson,**

The United Republic of Tanzania aligns itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the African Group. Nonetheless, we are glad for the opportunity to make this statement in our national capacity.

Allow me to begin by commending you, Chairperson, for the manner in which you are presiding over the proceedings of this meeting. Allow me also to thank the High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi and the entire UNHCR Secretariat for the outstanding humanitarian work that the Agency is doing in providing international protection and assistance to the millions of people who are on the run today. At a time when our world is faced with a multiplicity of conflicts, with a record of high displacement and refugee numbers, this obligation has never been more challenging.

As we meet here today, Tanzania continues to keep her borders open welcoming and giving asylum to credible and genuine persons fleeing persecution, civil unrest, ethnic tensions and political instabilities from their countries of origin. Currently, Tanzania is home to population of about 285,714 refugees and asylum seekers out of which 212,946 are Burundians; 72,393 are Congolese; and 375 are from other Nationalities.

**Chairperson,**

Anyone who has been following up closely the events in Burundi will agree with me that the current civil and political situation in Burundi is quite different from the situation way back in April 2015 when the Burundi crisis was unfolding. There has been a significant change since April, 2015, when refugees were fleeing persecution, and wide spread violence.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2019 the Minister for Home Affairs of Tanzania and his counterpart the Minister for Interior Affairs in Burundi met to discuss the hiccups facing the ongoing voluntary repatriation exercise among other issues. In that meeting, they made a commitment to implement the agreement reached on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 Tripartite Commission Meeting

to return 2,000 Burundian refugees voluntarily per week. The commitment was made because despite the fact that many refugees have registered for voluntary repatriation, the number of returnees has continued to decline with no any particular reason from both UNHCR Tanzania and UNHCR Burundi.

**Chairperson,**

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania wants to make it absolutely clear that, there have been neither intimidation nor confusing messages during mass meetings addressed by both the Minister for Home Affairs of Tanzania and the Minister for Interior Affairs of Burundi in the refugee camps. Refugees are registering themselves for assisted voluntary repatriation without any intimidation and others even wished to spontaneously return to their country of origin.

It is important to note that, recently the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania in collaboration with the UNHCR Representation in Tanzania has conducted a validation exercise to determine the actual numbers of refugees residing in the camps. The result of the validation shows that, about 25,000 refugees missed the exercise because they were not at the camps during the validation exercise which was conducted from 13<sup>th</sup> August – 01<sup>st</sup> October, 2019. We strongly believe, these refugees have spontaneously repatriated to their country of origin.

**Chairperson,**

It is against this background that my delegation wishes to refute in the strongest possible terms allegations that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is repatriating Burundian refugees forcefully. These allegations are unfounded and are aimed at tarnishing the good name and image of our country. My delegation wishes to assure this House that, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is and remains committed to assist refugees who have voluntarily registered for repatriation.

Tanzania believes that every refugee has the right to return home in conditions of safety and dignity especially now when the conditions in Burundi have stabilized tremendously warranting such returns.

Therefore, Tanzania calls upon the International Community in the spirit of responsibility and burden sharing to fully support the return process by providing funds to both UNHCR and IOM. We also believe that it is time for UNHCR to move from the facilitation to promotion phase, given the fundamental change that has taken place in Burundi.

We also call upon the engagement of development actors in investing in return areas in Burundi. Burundi should not be isolated; instead it should be assisted in developing the necessary infrastructures to allow maximum returns per convoy and to create the necessary social economic conditions for return and re-integration.

**Chairperson,**

On the Statelessness problem, it is unfortunate that there is no study which shows the number of stateless people or those at risks, but this does not mean that the problem does not exist. There are many factors that can potentially cause statelessness existence in Tanzania such as migration, communities which are found both in Tanzania and other neighbouring countries, the protracted refugee situation and low rate of birth registration.

The United Republic of Tanzania is neither party to the 1954 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons nor the 1961 United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. However, the Government pledged to ratify and domesticate the two international instruments during the intergovernmental ministerial meeting to mark the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention held in Geneva from 7 - 8 December 2011. These pledges were also reconfirmed during the Ministerial Conference on the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region which took place in Nairobi, from 16 - 18 April 2019.

The United Republic of Tanzania's commitment to addressing statelessness is laudable; demonstrated through its adoption of the 2017 Declaration and Action Plan of the ICGLR (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region) on the Eradication of Statelessness (2017-24), which foresees accession to the 1954 Convention on the Status of

Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness by 2019. With access to legal identity documentation and with the nomination of a government focal point on statelessness as well as the involvement of civil society in statelessness activities, the United Republic of Tanzania can now capitalise on its pledges and the existing momentum to end statelessness and ensure the right to a nationality for those affected on her territory.

To help resolve existing situations of statelessness among specific communities such as the Makonde and Comorians, the 2017 Citizenship Amendment Regulations reduces naturalization applications fees from USD 5,000 to about USD 900 per individual. In addition, the United Republic of Tanzania's historic decision to grant citizenship to several groups of refugees is a particularly commendable act to prevent statelessness. Tanzania has extended the right of nationality to long-term refugee populations and their descendants on three occasions: in 1980, to Rwandan and Burundian refugees who came to the United Republic of Tanzania in 1959 and the 1960s; in 2005, to Somali refugees of Bantu origin, and; in 2009/ 10 to Burundian refugees resident in Tanzania since 1972. Tanzania's leadership in implementing these naturalisation initiatives sets a valuable example to other States.

Going forward, the United Republic of Tanzania commits to the following with respect to the statelessness problem:

- (i) To acceding to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;
- (ii) To establish a national taskforce on statelessness with all its appointed members trained with the support of UNHCR, and whose role will be to steer the adoption of a national action plan to end statelessness and to monitor and to evaluate the implementation of this national action plan;
- (iii) To adopt the drafted National Action Plan to eradicate statelessness serving as national strategy of statelessness in the Country;
- (iv) To conduct a study on statelessness to understand the factors leaving certain populations stateless or at risk of statelessness and to ascertain the gravity of the problem of

statelessness in the country, whose findings will chart the road map towards the implementation of the national action plan;

- (v) To raise awareness and fostering common understanding about statelessness with members of Parliament, Senior Government Officials responsible for law reforms and other key stakeholders.

### **Chairperson,**

In conclusion, allow me to thank the High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi for his commitment to support the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania including his promise to address challenges related to environmental degradation and security in the areas surrounding refugee camps. These commitments were made during his recent visit to Tanzania in which he met with the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Dr. John Pombe Magufuli as well as in his meeting with the Prime Minister, Hon. Kassim Majaliwa.

Finally, allow me Mr. Chairperson to express our appreciation to the International Community, UNHCR, IOM, WFP and all other UN Sister Agencies for their continued co-operation and support to the Tanzania Refugee Programme. My delegation assures these important stakeholders of our continued support and co-operation in our joint quest for refugee solutions.

**I thank you for you kind attention.**

