



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 Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of
The Gambia at the 72nd Session of UNHCR EXCOM in Geneva, under item 3, Monday
4th October 2021**

Chairperson
Distinguish delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

We congratulate the UNHCR for conveying the 72nd EXCOM Meeting in this challenging time and commend the High Commissioner for the statement which highlighted the challenges impeding its work and implementation of their strategies, including COVID-19 pandemic.

In that regard, we take note of the UNHCR work in responding to these emergencies despite the numerous and unprecedented challenges and call on the donor community to increase a sustained funding and support mechanism to the work of the UNHCR, as the impact of these emergency crisis negatively affect the refugees and displaced people at most.

Furthermore, we encourage the UNHCR and partners to continue to provide support to the people and communities and technical assistance to Member States in their work to avoid human catastrophe among the persons of concern and to continue to dignify the refugees, internal displaced persons and Asylum seekers, given the overwhelming refugee population confronting the host countries including The Gambia.

It is more than one year since the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increase uncertainties to the attainment of the agenda 2030 and exposure to economic shocks for many of our economies. In addition, COVID-19 has rendered our countries' ability to provide adequate social services including health, for their people including and the displaced population very challenging.

Therefore, our delegation encourages the increase in the support to countries hosting refugee and displaced people to access safe and adequate COVID-19 vaccines and rolling it out to effectively immunize their population, including refugees and other Persons of Concern tp that effect.

The need to step up support for refugees in these areas are but not limited to - education, health, livelihoods, documentation, access to opportunities through appropriate vocational education and apprenticeship. This would go a long way in strengthening their resilience capacity in the face of this global health pandemic. Also facilitate support to refugees with opportunities to rebuild their homes or access or build affordable homes and a refugee micro funds for Entrepreneurship pursuits.

The Gambia continues to host refugees mainly from Casamance, region in Senegal and as well as migrants, asylum seekers from the ECOWAS-sub region and beyond. As of July 2021, the Refugee and Asylum seekers population in the Gambia is 4124 and the majority of these are settled in the rural areas and few are in the urban centres. Refugees and Asylum seekers co-exist in harmony with the local communities, and they are accorded access to the same opportunities to participate in socio-economic activities as well as access social services as their Gambian national counterparts, including the equal admission of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Over the years the Government of The Gambia enjoys strong partnership with the UNHCR through the Gambia Commission for Refugees, the Commission responsible of providing protection and humanitarian services to the refugees in collaboration with the NGO Partner (GAFNA) and UNHCR.

The management of refugees' affairs in a transparent manner in any situation would require capacity strengthening in both human and institutional. Thus, we reiterate our call to the UNHCR for technical assistance and support in the relevant areas to enhance the capacity of the Gambia Commission for Refugees to enable them accord a fairer protection environment to refugees, Asylum seekers and other PoCs in the Gambia.

Nevertheless, the Gambia will continue to build on the achievements attained on the management and integration of refugees, displaced and other persons of concern with relevance to the existing universal and regional conventions and protocols to which The Gambia is a State party – such as the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol), the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (the OAU Convention) and the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention).

Hence it is worth mentioning some of the positive measure currently implemented by the Gambia in terms of passport issuance to facilitate the emergency overseas travel for medical and urgent family needs of refugees and other persons of Concern in lieu of the Conventional Travel Document. The Gambia Commission for Refugees (GCR) in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and The Gambia Immigration Department recently issued Four Machine-Readable Passports to a refugee family to facilitate their overseas travel for family visits and education trip abroad.

I am pleased to state that the Government of The Gambia will continue to demonstrate political will to end Statelessness in line with the global and regional frameworks, including the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. We will continue to commit to the adoption of a national integrated strategy framework to enhance a sustainable refugees management system in relation to documentation and integration.

Finally, we highly assure the UNHCR of our support to the work under its mandate on the welfare and plight of refugees and displaced people.

I thank you all