



**SOUTH AFRICA'S STATEMENT AT THE
73RD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (EXCOM)**

10 OCTOBER 2022

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairperson,
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Distinguished Ambassador of Chad on behalf of the African Group.

My delegation expresses its hearty congratulations to the High Commissioner on the extension of his term of office, and wish him all the best in coordinating global action to deal with refugee crisis. We would also like to express our appreciation to the High Commissioner for his report. South Africa welcomes the report, highlighting global trends on forced displacement, current protection challenges experienced by displaced persons as well as the work that remains to be done.

The South African government extends a word of appreciation to the Office of the High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection for the continued support on our efforts to eradicate asylum appeals backlog. The high-level visit by Assistant High Commissioner, Ms. Gillian Triggs, to South Africa early this year to review bilateral commitments made in 2015 is an illustrious sign of support, amongst others, we were able to provide progress report on the backlog project.

Some of the outstanding commitments from the meeting with the Assistant High Commissioner, is for the UNHCR Office to facilitate an engagement with Ambassadors of sending States about the rights and obligations of these States. The UNHCR Office is also supposed to organise a workshop with the judiciary in South Africa through the Department of Justice on the complexity of international law. We are looking forward to these engagements.

We have also made progress with regards to the R143 million funding from the UNHCR on backlogs. Keys amongst we have been able to:

- Conduct joint training with the Judicial Institute for Africa (JIFA).
- To enhance training of new members of RAASA.(Refugee Appeals Authority of South Africa)

South Africa expresses its concern about the disproportionate (unequal or uneven) representation of nationals from countries such as South Africa in the UNHCR structures. South Africa is one of the major contributors and remain committed to extend its financial support for the operations of the UNHCR.

The advent of COVID-19 pandemic has forced countries to adapt and find new innovative ways towards service delivery and related operations. In South Africa, an online solution to issue electronic permits and physical bookings for scheduled visits to the refugee offices was introduced in consultation with UNHCR and other key stakeholders.

Since May 2022, South Africa has received over 20 000 (twenty thousand) requests for intention to apply for new asylum, which we believe they are part of the backlog that built over the state of disaster period, and over 5 000 (five thousand) have already been adjudicated at first instance. Furthermore, over 89 000 (eighty-nine thousand) requests for extension of asylum and refugees permits have been processed online and remain valid. In this regard, the department is looking at additional measures to recover lost time in this area.

Chairperson,

The majority of refugee hosting countries in the world are low- and middle-income countries. In most of these host countries, local communities often experience high levels of poverty and face increased chances of economic vulnerability. In this regard, the economic conditions of the host communities are not necessarily better than of those seeking refuge. This situation, as in the case of South Africa of today lead to economic competition over scarce resources between host and refugee communities and cause increased social tensions within the society.

Much as hosting refugees is an international obligation, a humanitarian gesture and a moral statement, it is saddled with very deep challenges which cannot be ignored by this forum. We need to begin discussing these matters as well. These include deliberate, unnecessary human-made causes of migration. Linked to this is the burden on host countries by straining public resources; and increasing societal strife and the potential for civil conflict. More support to alleviate the burden of hosting refugees should be given by employing durable and sustainable solutions in accordance with the Global Compact on Refugees such as addressing root causes of forced displacement, intensification of resettlement and voluntary returns.

South Africa believes that there is an urgent need to lessen liability on refugee hosting countries especially those in developing countries. Therefore, more support to alleviate the burden of hosting refugees is by employing durable and sustainable solutions in accordance with the Global Compact on Refugees such as addressing root causes of forced displacement, intensification of resettlement and voluntary returns.

Chairperson,

Recalling the outcomes of the Global Compact on Refugees and the inaugural Global Refugee Forum on a more equitable, predictable burden and responsibility sharing among states when it comes to refugee protection, my delegation calls on the UNHCR and the international community to provide more support to host countries. Several countries in the African continent host up to 65% of the world's persons of concern and 16 countries in Southern Africa host nearly 9.7 million people of concern including over 1 million asylum seekers and refugees.

Chairperson,

We call on the UNHCR to maximise its mandate to provide international protection to refugees especially in the occupied territories of Western Sahara and Palestine.

South Africa pledges its solidarity with all persons experiencing oppression, persecution, conflict, and other forms of instabilities and reassures this august house that those who seek international protection in the country will continue to receive support and empathy of my government whilst working with international community structures in addressing the root causes of forced migration.

In conclusion, South Africa is overhauling its Citizenship, International Migration and Refugee Protection to respond to emerging challenges.

I thank you