



ZIMBABWE

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF
PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

HONOURABLE PROFESSOR PAUL MAVIMA (MP)

**TO THE
73RD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (EXCOM)
MEETING**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

10-14 OCTOBER 2022

- **Chairperson,**
- **Your Excellencies,**
- **Distinguished Delegates,**

Zimbabwe joins other delegations who have taken the floor before us to commend you Chairperson for the excellent manner in which you are presiding over our deliberations.

Your Excellency, my delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Chad on behalf of the African Group. In adding our voice to the general debate on the report of the High Commissioner, Zimbabwe acknowledges the various challenges that have driven an unprecedented large number of people away from their homes. Indeed, we are facing trying times globally that require our collaborative efforts to provide immediate assistance and lasting solutions to the people of concern to the UNHCR.

Your Excellency, Zimbabwe has adopted pro-poor policies and strategies as enunciated in our economic blueprint, the National Development Strategy 1, with a view to addressing structural barriers in order to leave no one and no place behind. Sustained efforts have been made to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus so as to promote self-reliance of refugees and asylum seekers.

Your Excellency, as a host country Zimbabwe fully recognizes and acknowledges the importance of meeting her international obligations on the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Zimbabwe is promoting and diversifying self-reliance projects in order to build the resilience of refugees and asylum seekers.

In this regard, Government is mainstreaming blended approaches by creating an enabling environment for refugee-initiated projects to flourish through strategic partnerships with local and international agencies. To that end, my Government has availed an additional 100 hectares of arable land for the expansion of the irrigation scheme at Tongogara Refugee Camp to facilitate the establishment of an integrated livelihood park. Our main objective is to promote food and nutrition security for refugees, asylum seekers and host communities. In addition, Zimbabwe has availed

4 400 metric tons of maize grain to the refugee programme under a twinning arrangement with the World Food Programme in pursuit of our commitment towards humanitarian assistance.

Your Excellency, the report of the High Commissioner has highlighted “some deeply worrying and concerning failures by States to uphold their international protection obligations”. It is in this regard that Member States need to address the root causes that have contributed to reduced capacity in meeting international obligations, in order to attain durable and lasting solutions. In addition, we call upon the UNHCR to consider reducing the funding gap between Member States’ needs and available resources which has continued to widen, particularly in Southern Africa.

Your Excellency, the report of the High Commissioner also makes reference to expansion of partnerships and the enhanced engagement of all parts of society. In this regard, and in line with the pledges that Zimbabwe made at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, the government has made strides in facilitating the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in sport and cultural programmes in Zimbabwe. The Government entered into strategic partnerships with the Zimbabwe Olympic Committee, Zimbabwe Football Association, and Zimbabwe Judo Association among other sports associations to include refugees and asylum seekers in their activities. To date, the Tongogara United Football Club is playing in Division Two of the Zimbabwe Premier League while other sporting disciplines have since been integrated into national activities.

Your Excellency, in line with our developmental trajectory, several youth-led organizations have been established to contribute towards the transformation of Tongogara Refugee Camp. The promotion of youth enterprises aims to harness their capacities and enhance the localization of humanitarian action towards refugee protection. This gives the youth positive coping mechanisms while also addressing challenges related to drug and substance abuse and mental health issues associated with idleness.

Your Excellency, we note the High Commissioner’s observation that this is a non-political forum; but I can not conclude my remarks without highlighting the negative, indeed deeply damaging impact that unilateral

coercive measures have had upon Zimbabwe's ability to adequately meet the needs of people of concern within our country.

The report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights articulates how unilateral sanctions have decimated the economic performance of the country, aggravated humanitarian-related challenges and consequently adversely impacted upon access to basic rights for Zimbabwean residents, including refugees. It is in this respect that we strongly support the call for urgent and effective action to eliminate the use of UCMs.

In conclusion Your Excellency, I wish to extend our gratitude to the UNHCR's continued support to Zimbabwe. The strong relations between our government and UNHCR, coupled with the able leadership of the High Commissioner Mr. Fillippo Grandi and his team have resulted in the introduction of a developmental approach to refugee protection thereby enabling refugees to more easily realise their aspirations in Zimbabwe.

I Thank You.