

Excellencies Ladies and gentlemen

My delegation joins others congratulating the Chairperson for presiding over this 73<sup>rd</sup> Session with exemplary competence and gravitas. We would also like to commend the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for the comprehensive report of the organization's activities and for the well-earned renewal of his term, whilst aligning with statements delivered by other members of the African Group.

Chair, Sierra Leone, as a former important source country for refugees, is deeply committed to providing support and protection for all refugees and displaced persons irrespective of their origins. As part of this commitment, Sierra Leone created the National Commission for Social Action shortly after the end of our civil war to provide essential services to displaced Sierra Leoneans and Refugees from neighbouring countries. The Commission is the lead agency for refugee protection and service delivery to vulnerable persons. NaCSA also has the mandate to serve as a member of the National **Refugee Authority in Sierra Leone, making it the implementing agency as well as the lead national mechanism through which humanitarian needs and civil protection** in the country are duly and effectively addressed.

Chair, Sierra Leone's commitment to the protection of refugees has been catalogued below:

***Sierra Leone has enacted several Legislative and Legal frameworks*** which have given a much-needed Legal basis to deliver essential National and International services more effectively for Sierra Leoneans and Refugees. The enactment of the Refugee Protection Act of 2007, being an Act to provide for the recognition and protection of refugees in Sierra Leone domesticated the following international and regional normative frameworks: (i) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva,1951), (ii) Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967) and (iii) OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, signed in (Addis Ababa (1969).

***My delegation is pleased to inform that Sierra Leone has established a National Refugee Authority with a Secretariat*** comprised of an Appeal Committee, a judge of the superior court appointed by the Chief Justice,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international Cooperation, Human Right Commission of Sierra Leone, the Implementing Agency NaCSA, religious councils, Immigration Department and other relevant line ministries.

***Madam Chair, Sierra Leone has prioritize improving Human settlement and the dignity of Displaced, Refugees and vulnerable persons by:***

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(i) Constructing shelters, disbursing cash grants for locally integrated refugees and issuing country of origin passports with one-year residence permits to 250 locally integrated refugees in 2019 and 2022; (ii) facilitating and supporting the promotion of the three durable solutions in Sierra Leone (Voluntary repatriation, local integration and third country resettlement); (iii) Provided land for shelter and agronomic activities for refugees in host communities and (iv) Declaring the cessation clause in 2012 (i) operationalizing the three durable solution clause and Refugee Protection Act, 2007 in collaboration with UNHCR.

Madam Chair, Sierra Leone continues to Support the normalisation of lives of Refugees and vulnerable persons evident by the development of a road map for UNHCR disengagement with established structures, systems, processes, and procedures for a successor project “Tenki Salone” compensating host communities for the implementation of socio-economic infrastructure projects for concrete solutions and opportunities for the remaining caseload of 393 refugees in their respective host communities.

Sierra Leone has developed a **Statelessness policy**, provided birth certificates for persons of concern (POCs) and remain committed to reducing statelessness by 2024.

The Government of Sierra Leone in collaboration with UNHCR jointly developed an assistance framework for registered asylum seekers in Sierra Leone as a consequence of they benefitted from a one-off cash grant support.

Madam Chair, though the country has scored critical successes, the following notable challenges persist ;(i) The review of the National Refugee Protection Act, 2007 **remains incomplete** (ii) The ‘Tenki Sierra’ (thank you Sierra Leone) project was discontinued for lack of funding (iii) the continued refusal of 384 remaining refugees to opt for either local integration or voluntary repatriation

in anticipation of third country resettlement programmes for which they have been determined ineligible.

Madam Chair, kindly permit me to use this opportunity to make a special appeal to the UNHCR to fulfil its commitment to the people of Sierra Leone, **by making the critical investments *required to resume the full-scale implementation of the “thank you Sierra Leone” project.***

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Let me close Madam Chair, by calling on all to support processes that strengthen the international, regional and national human rights regimes and mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) which hold the promise of mitigating some of the root causes that trigger wars and cause hitherto peaceful and thriving global citizens to become refugees and IDPs.

Thank you.