



**Statement by Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Malusi Gigaba**

**Item3: General Debate**

**67<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High  
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Chairperson,

High Commissioner,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset please allow me to express South Africa's support for the statement delivered on behalf of the African Group. Africa is faced with complex challenges but we continue to rise, seek concrete and sustainable solutions.

South Africa welcomes the adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants by world leaders at the High Level Summit addressing the large movements of refugees and migrants on 19 September 2016 and applauds the fundamental commitment by states to protect the human rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status. We are convinced that this declaration marks a turn point in our history as nations in dealing with persons on the move. We must also

heed the call to maintain our high level of ambition to ensure that we direct our collective efforts to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale. However, South Africa wishes to reiterate that we must not forget the plight of forcibly internally displaced persons everywhere and at all times. We must heed the call of the Agenda for Humanity and leave no one behind.

Mr Chairperson,

The African Continent continues to bear the brunt of hosting a vast number of forcibly displaced persons with South Africa being one of the largest single recipients of asylum seekers over time. South Africa recognises that under-development lies at the heart of this displacement. Every effort should be made to comprehensively address these root causes. Under-development is manifested in widespread poverty, hunger, joblessness and inadequate infrastructure. These manifestations generally lead to armed conflict and instability due to competition for scarce resources.

The New York Declaration direct the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in close coordination with relevant States, host countries, and other relevant United Nations entities to initiate and develop a comprehensive refugee response framework for each situation involving large movements of refugees. In this regard, South Africa commits herself, armed with experiences and lessons learnt in dealing with large numbers of asylum seekers, to contribute meaningfully to the development of the framework and other commitments related to safe, orderly and regular migration.

Mr Chairperson,

The Declaration by Member State further pledge to ‘support early childhood education for refugee children...promote tertiary education, skills training and vocational education.’ It is with greatest pleasure to advise your Office that South

Africa long met this obligation, as early as 2005. We do this knowing very well that young people, in many circumstances, have the capacity to make considerable contributions to their communities and as future leaders, they must be empowered with skills and knowledge. In South Africa, asylum seekers and refugees are accorded these rights immediately on applying for asylum. This in turn has changed many lives of persons of concern in South Africa through acquiring formal education, employment and conducting business. In turn this serves as a contribution to the development of their countries of origin, as migrants maintain ties with people back home, whether through sending remittances, returning home to contribute in the reconstruction of their countries, or serving as emissaries.

South Africa supports all efforts, in particularly regional and continental programmes that address developmental challenges. Among these are the Industrial Development Policy Framework, African Union initiatives like the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI) aimed at ensuring the acceleration of regional infrastructure development around the African Continent, and Agenda 2063, including the aspiration to silence all guns by 2020.

Mr Chairperson,

South Africa wishes to reiterate that economic prosperity and sustainable development can never be realized without peace and security, development and respect for human rights. We therefore remain fully committed to playing our part in realising the aspirations of the United Nations, the African Union and the rest of the developing world.

The South African Government wishes to advise this august house that we are undertaking massive steps to review our immigration policies informed by contemporary developments in this area to ensure that our policies are aligned with our Constitutional values and international standards. The envisioned approach

involves the whole of society in managing international migration, and is informed by recognition of the unique contribution made by migrants to the cultural diversity and social cohesion of the country. When the policy development process is concluded, it is expected to provide us with completely new perspectives and tools that inform the overall management of migration in South Africa.

Mr Chairperson,

In conclusion, South Africa encourages all parties gathered at this ExCom meeting to proactively engage each other so that we may find concrete solutions to the challenges faced by forcibly displaced persons and states that host them. Equitable burden-sharing amongst all states is crucial.

I thank you.