

Statement of the Executive Committee on
Enhancing International Cooperation, Solidarity, Local Capacities and Humanitarian Action
for Refugees in Africa

*on the occasion of
the high-level segment of the 65th session of the Executive Committee
of the High Commissioner's Program*

We, Member States of the Executive Committee, underlining the critical and complex nature of humanitarian emergencies and protracted refugee situations in Africa and the challenges they present, and recognizing the immense efforts by African governments and the African Union to address these, renew our commitment to mitigate and resolve their consequences and to work toward the prevention of such situations in the future.

We note that throughout history, the States and peoples of Africa have demonstrated generous hospitality and solidarity to millions of refugees seeking safety outside their countries and to persons displaced internally within their countries. This solidarity has been reinforced by the 1969 *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* and the 2009 *African Union Kampala Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa*. Millions have been supported to find durable solutions, particularly through voluntary repatriation, while others have integrated locally or resettled to third countries. We recognize that host countries and the international community have made, and continue to make, efforts to alleviate the burdens placed on host communities and to strengthen the resilience both of the displaced and of host communities.

We remain deeply concerned by the significant number of people who are forced to flee their homes within their countries and across borders due to conflict, violence and other reasons including terrorism. We are equally troubled that progress toward solving many protracted refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) situations remains insufficient and major protection challenges persist, including insecurity facing displaced populations and humanitarian workers, *refoulement*, and other breaches of international protection principles. We are also worried that the delivery of humanitarian assistance has been hindered by limited access. Despite record levels of voluntary contributions, serious funding shortages have resulted in, among other things, reductions in food rations and other humanitarian support, and have hampered progress in finding durable solutions to displacement as well as in promoting the self-reliance of refugees.

We hereby reaffirm our collective commitment, through enhanced regional and international solidarity, burden-sharing and partnership, to support host countries and communities in building their capacity to better address and resolve the multi-faceted challenges of forced displacement and, in particular, to strengthen protection, improve the situation of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons, and facilitate durable solutions, while taking into account special needs of vulnerable groups including women, children and persons with disabilities.

We therefore call upon African States and the international community to:

- Urgently pursue conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding efforts, while taking all necessary measures to provide safe asylum and protection to forcibly displaced populations in line with regional and international frameworks, commitments and principles;

- Strengthen the refugee emergency response capacities of governments and host communities, while ensuring effective coordination among humanitarian actors through the UNHCR in refugee situations and OCHA in situations of internal displacement;
- Strengthen the protection framework for IDPs through, where applicable, acceding to the 2009 *African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa*;
- Consider acceding, where appropriate, to the 1954 *Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* and to the 1961 *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*;
- Take all necessary and appropriate measures to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants and ensure a protection-sensitive response to mixed migration, including those who risk their lives at sea while trying to reach safety;
- Address protracted refugee situations by redoubling efforts to realize durable solutions including sustainable voluntary repatriation, reintegration and reconciliation as well as to provide increased opportunities for resettlement and local integration;
- Make efforts to elaborate self-reliance programmes based on the specific needs of refugees and IDPs;
- Include the needs of refugees, IDPs and returnees in national and international development and poverty reduction strategies, devise and implement projects to enhance the resilience of host communities, and enable displaced populations to live their lives in safety and dignity;
- Embrace all affected populations, including host communities, as active partners in the formulation and implementation of programmes and activities affecting their lives; and
- Provide, in the spirit of solidarity and burden-sharing, adequate and effective financial assistance, commensurate with needs, to support refugee and IDP populations and the communities hosting them.

We express our gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for supporting the organization of this high-level segment.

Geneva
30 September 2014