



**SOUTH AFRICA'S STATEMENT AT THE
74TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (EXCOM)**

09 OCTOBER 2023

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Check Against Delivery

**Madam Chairperson,
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Excellency's,
Distinguished Delegates,**

South Africa aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Republic of Congo on behalf of the African Group.

Let me start by expressing our concern over the recent devastating escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. South Africa calls for the immediate cessation of violence, restraint, and peace between Israel and Palestine.

My delegation wishes to align itself with calls made by the High Commissioner in his opening remarks placing a spotlight on protracted conflicts across the globe, including latest situations in places like Sudan, the Sahel, Ukraine, amongst others which place displacement figures to exceed 110 million mark.

Your words firmly remind us of the message from Dennis Francis, the President of the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly that highlights the urgent need for 'peace, prosperity, progress, and sustainability as the international community's "four

supreme objectives”, that, if achieved, would “significantly alter the current trajectory of disappointment and disillusionment...”

This call can never be more urgent today.

It is our belief that, if we are to do more in investing on preventing conflicts, we should start by paying equal attention to conflicts irrespective of regions and equal distribution of resources in ending prolonged conflicts and preventing new situations.

This call is emboldened more by observations that suggest that member states are capable of spending more on supporting war, but we do not appear to be doing enough for billions of people in need.

Chairperson,

South Africa is currently working with the UNHCR to address backlogs at the level of appeals. My delegation would like to reiterate that contrary to popular belief South Africa has no backlogs at the level of first instance adjudication but rather cases of persons who have already been processed and were found not to be in need of any international protection. They take these decisions on appeal with the Appeals Authority. Unfortunately, the

appeal process in South Africa is unending and this leads to the clogging of the asylum system blocking the path for those who truly deserve protection. It has the possibility of compromising the credibility of the provisions of the Convention.

It is in this regard that South Africa extends a word of appreciation to the Office of the High Commissioner and Assistant High Commissioner for Protection for their continued support on our endeavors to eradicate the Asylum Appeals Backlog.

As our contribution to the “I Belong Campaign” and as part of our pledge to make sure that the birth of every human being is recorded and registered, the government has taken initiatives to open Home Affairs Offices in all hospitals and clinics where births are taking place so that all new-borne can be recorded and registered even before they leave the hospital. This process has increased our civil registration campaign significantly.

Chairperson,

Whilst 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, South Africa believes that solutions should involve all sending, transit, host and donor countries in realizing their responsibilities within the international protection space.

In line with the Statement of the High Commissioner this morning, we further call on sending states, regional and multilateral organizations to put more effort in addressing the root causes of current and prolonged conflicts that inevitably lead to the displacement of people internally and more often across borders.

Lastly Chairperson,

It is our firm belief that if we as the international community sit and do nothing or do less, the future of our world and the next generations will have been lost in our hands, probably forever. Lest we forget the famous quote, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.'

I thank you.