



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

**STATEMENT
BY
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**MINISTER OF JUSTICE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 75TH SESSION
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONERS FOR
REFUGEES PROGRAMME (EXCOM)**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

15th OCTOBER 2024

For delivery

- Thank You Chairperson;
 - Your Excellency the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;
 - Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates.
1. On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Botswana, I am pleased to join other delegations at this important forum of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme.
 2. We extend our appreciation to the High Commissioner and his staff for the excellent facilitation of the meeting.
 3. Botswana wishes to acknowledge the hard work and concerted efforts that went into organizing the Second Global Refugee Forum in December 2023. Botswana associates herself with the fruitful outcome of the Forum and is pleased to inform that concrete actions are already underway to implement Botswana's pledges.
 4. Botswana aligns herself with the Statement delivered by Her Excellency Irène Marie Cécile Mboukou , Minister of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action of the Republic of the Congo on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson

5. Allow me to congratulate High Commissioner Filippo Grandi for his wide ranging and inspiring opening statement, reminding us of our collective responsibility to protect refugees and address the challenges of displacement and statelessness.

6. Botswana joins UNHCR and Member States in commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness. For her part, Botswana has undertaken a qualitative study to determine the extent and nature of statelessness in the country.
7. Furthermore, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act which was passed by Parliament in August 2024 addresses statelessness, and when it comes into effect, will allow the registration as Botswana citizens of persons who have no citizenship following a period of residence in the country.
8. During the same session, the Births and Deaths Registration Act was amended to make provision for the registration as Botswana citizens of abandoned children under the age of seven (7) years.

Chairperson

9. I am pleased to announce that in August 2024, the Parliament of Botswana passed a Bill to repeal and reenact, with amendments, the Refugees (Recognition and Control) Act.
10. The Bill gives effect to certain provisions of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. This is a milestone that we celebrate, and I wish to express my appreciation to the UNHCR for the technical support and collaboration during the review of the Act.

11. The new Act will provide for a four-level refugee status determination process, and creates the office of the Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the Botswana Refugees Committee, in alignment with international best practice.

Chairperson

12. Botswana further appreciates the efforts of UNHCR in finding durable solutions to the plight of refugees. To this end, Two Hundred and Eighty-Nine (289) refugees in Botswana are at an advanced stage to complete the necessary requirements for resettlement in the United States of America. Similarly, Botswana has stepped up efforts to integrate refugees, particularly individuals with protracted cases, and those who came to Botswana as unaccompanied minors and therefore cannot reasonably be returned to their countries of origin.

Chairperson

13. The Government of Botswana has started the implementation of several projects at the Dukwi Refugee Settlement. These projects are a deliberate effort by the Government to include refugees in the national development agenda.
14. These projects include the rehabilitation of the water supply infrastructure, construction of access roads, maintenance of houses, and construction of a conference centre. Upon completion of the projects, the living conditions of refugees will indeed improve significantly.

Chairperson

15. Botswana continues to receive increasing numbers of irregular onward movements. These are individuals who came into Botswana from neighbouring countries where they were either recognized, rejected, or left their host countries before completion of the process to determine their applications for asylum.

16. Botswana acknowledges that it is allowable for a person recognized in one State to claim asylum in another State, but that irregular onward movements result in inefficiencies, administrative duplication, delays and significant costs. It is also seen as a form of misuse of the asylum system. That notwithstanding, all onward movements are received and processed accordingly.

17. Allow me to conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to receiving asylum seekers, giving them the right to be heard and a home away from home.

I thank you for your attention.