

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



STATEMENT BY HON. LUCIA WITBOOI, MP,

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SECURITY

DURING THE 75TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME [EXCOM]

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

14 OCTOBER 2024

Chairperson

Your Excellency High Commissioner

Distinguished delegates

1. It is my pleasure and honour, and that of my delegation, to be among the Member States participating in the 75th EXCOM to address this distinguished body on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Namibia.
2. Namibia aligns itself with the statement on behalf of the African Group delivered by the **Republic of the Congo**.
3. Namibia is currently hosting 6,494 asylum seekers and refugees, with the majority being women and children from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Namibia is requesting the revocation of the cessation clause for asylum seekers and refugees who are unwilling to voluntarily repatriate to their countries, despite the return of peace.
4. Chairperson, contemporary refugee movements have increased since the end of the Cold War, leading to a growing global phenomenon. Political disturbances, repression, wars, and natural disasters contribute to migratory movements. In Africa, refugees are victims of civil wars, conflicts, human rights abuses, poverty, social inequities, and environmental degradation. Refugees and internally displaced persons endure difficult lives, fleeing from war, hunger, persecution while embarking on challenging journeys to find safety in different environments. It is dismaying and distressing that internal conflicts and wars are major factors, with innocent women and children being the primary victims.
5. Chairperson, today, as Member States, we congregate here with one aspiration to voice out loudly and clearly to have a world without refugees. The time is now for the global village to put aside guns and ammunition and pursue dialogue to agree in the name of peace and not in the name of a few individuals that have their own motives at the expense of the innocent majority. Many precious lives have been lost, many properties have been destroyed, we cannot afford to lose more innocent lives anymore. We must change, and the time for change is now, we are the masters of our own destiny.

6. Chairperson, Namibia commends your continued commitment to refugees and other persons of concern. Namibia further commends UNHCR's efforts in providing humanitarian assistance, particularly to DRC, Sudan, Chad and Palestine and others where thousands of people are affected by war conflict, and natural disasters. Namibia is conscious that the increase in wars, conflicts and natural disasters continues to present challenges to the UNHCR Agency.
7. Namibia understands the significant humanitarian funding gap and the necessity of partnering with other organizations. Namibia emphasizes the importance of UNHCR closely collaborating with development actors and private sectors to enhance the humanitarian response. This collaboration should consistently adhere to the fundamental humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality, and independence.
8. Chairperson, upon gaining independence, Namibia acknowledged the crucial role of citizenship in ensuring a dignified life for individuals. The country took decisive steps to tackle statelessness by offering naturalization opportunities to non-Namibian citizens who were residing in the country at the time of independence. Additionally, in 2010, foreign nationals who had been living in Namibia from 1930 to December 1977 were also granted naturalization to prevent statelessness. These proactive measures have successfully granted citizenship to a significant number of individuals.
9. To further combat statelessness, the #IBelong Campaign has been making significant progress in Namibia. In 2019, a consultation on Namibia's readiness to ratify the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness took place, leading to the promulgation of the **Regularisation of Status of Certain Residents of Namibia and their Descendants Act** last month, and the **Statelessness Determination and Protection Bill** which is yet to be tabled soon in Parliament. The new legal framework will effectively tackle statelessness, close existing loopholes, protect individuals deemed stateless, and crucially, grant citizenship to those without a nationality.
10. Chairperson, Namibia has made the decision to rename the refugee identity card to the *"African Guest Identity Card."* This decision was made in recognition of our own history as refugees seeking independence and the desire to change the connotations associated with

the refugee identity. The renaming of the card will not affect the criteria for obtaining refugee status in Namibia. This decision is in line with the spirit of Pan-Africanism.

11. The new African Guest Identity Cards have been ordered. Unfortunately, there was a delay in printing and distributing the cards on World Refugee Day due to technical issues with the printing machine. However, the issues have now been resolved, and the registration of the new *African Guest Identity Cards* will continue at Osire Refugee Settlement.

12. Chairperson, in conclusion, Namibia remains committed to upholding her international obligation to provide humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and Internally Displaced Persons with basic amenities such as protection, basic education and primary healthcare. Namibia shall continue to work with UNHCR Office, the World Food Programme, and International Organisation for Migration in accordance with the established international instruments and national laws.

I thank you!