

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



**MAIN STATEMENT TO THE 75<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME**

**(EXCOM)**

**MR. DICKSON MATEMBO, PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF  
HOME AFFAIRS AND INTERNAL SECURITY, ZAMBIA**

**GENEVA, 14<sup>TH</sup> TO 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2024**

**Distinguished Chairperson, High Commissioner, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor to address this esteemed assembly at the 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Zambia, I wish to extend our deepest gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for its unwavering commitment to protecting and assisting refugees and other persons of concern around the world.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Zambia has continued to provide a wide range of protection services to refugees and persons of concern. These include civil registration and documentation, access to basic services, protection for individuals with specific needs, access to justice, efforts to eradicate statelessness, programs that promote livelihoods and self-reliance as well as foster coexistence between persons of concern and their host communities.

I am pleased to report that Zambia launched the first-ever National Refugee Policy and Implementation Plan in February 2024. The policy provides clear guidelines on refugee management and protection.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF), Zambia made ten refined strategic pledges aimed at improving the lives of refugees and host communities. These pledges include enhanced local integration and documentation, empowering refugees through diversified livelihoods, digitizing civil registration, and including refugees in the Farmer Input Support Program (FISP). Additionally, our pledges cover comprehensive inclusion in education, social inclusion through

sports, arts, and culture, access to electricity and sustainable energy, inclusion in national statistics, alternatives to immigration detention, and improved health services.

I am pleased to announce that in June 2024 part of the Meheba Refugee Settlement was connected to the national electricity grid for the first time since the settlement was developed.

In addition, both public and private tertiary institutions, in the year 2024 have increased the number of scholarships and bursaries given to the persons of concern by signing a number of memoranda of understanding, showing their commitment to providing tertiary education to persons of concern along-side Zambian children.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Zambia acknowledges that Refugees are particularly vulnerable to statelessness, often due to a lack of documentation, which can lead to marginalization, exclusion, and deepened inequalities. In this regard, the Zambian Government has developed the National Action Plan for Eradicating Statelessness. We are also actively working to harmonize laws related to refugee management and protection as well as statelessness to ensure a more cohesive and effective framework, and the accession to the 1961 Convention, with a Cabinet Memorandum submitted to the Ministry of Justice.

Further, progress has been made by the Government to decentralize the issuance of birth certificates to districts with refugee settlements so that all children born from refugee parents have the opportunity to show proof of their birth.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Despite our achievements, we continue to face challenges. Like many other countries, Zambia has been adversely affected by the El Niño drought, which has disrupted our rainfall patterns and led to poor crop yields across the country. This situation has strained our resources, impacting both our citizens and the persons of concern in our care.

Resource allocation remains a pressing issue, as budget reductions have exacerbated the strain on our refugee management and protection efforts. Despite having experienced a drought, the Zambian Government has continued to have an open-door policy of still accepting asylum seekers from neighboring countries.

**In Conclusion,**

I am pleased to report that the World Bank in September 2024, approved a grant of thirty million dollars under the IDA-20 funding. This funding is intended to foster economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities, improve livelihood activities and infrastructure development in health, education and the road network in the Meheba Refugee Settlement. Further, the grant will also provide support towards the review of the current Refugee Act of 2017 and digitalize the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees to offer better and effective services to the persons of concern.

As we move forward, let us continue to work together, innovate, and share our vision of a world where the rights and dignity of every person are upheld.

**Thank you.**