

75th Session of the UNHCR Executive Council

Comments by the Secretary of State in charge of Multilateral Cooperation

Geneva, October 2024

It is my honour to address this 75th EXCOM at this crucial moment as we gather to reflect on the #IBelong campaign and our collective efforts to end statelessness and the echoes of the second Global Refugee Forum held last December still resonate strongly. The Forum was a testament to what we can achieve when we come together with shared purpose and determination.

As the world grapples with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, with so many people forced from their homes, our obligation to continue and address the issue is more crucial than ever. Multiple interlocking challenges – from raging conflicts to the devastating effects of climate change – have aggravated the difficulties of displaced populations and stateless individuals, which has increased 10% from 2022 to 2023, worldwide. Unbelievable.

Excellencies,

Home ... – this simple word carries profound meaning for each one of us. It evokes memories of safety, of comfort, of belonging. Yet ... for millions around the world, this fundamental notion has been tragically inverted. Home, the very symbol of security and comfort, has become for many, a zone of grave danger. The place that ought to be a fortress, where we can nurture our children, becomes a death chamber from which people are desperately trying to escape.

For Equatorial Guinea, our responsibility, is clear. We are engaged in helping to restore the true meaning of home – as a place of safety, of belonging, of dignity. This means supporting countries and communities to address the factors that turn homes into danger zones, ensuring that our protection mechanisms are robust enough to respond when people are forced to flee and creating conditions that allow for safe and dignified returns when possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just last week, we gathered in Addis Ababa to review the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, a phenomenon that has historically shaped the societies and economies in Africa, particularly the Central Africa region. Against that backdrop, the ECCAS region is working insistently to harmonize its migration policies, share best practices, and develop a common approaches to migration governance. This collaborative effort reflects our commitment to the GCM's objectives and our recognition that effective migration management requires regional solutions.

Ending statelessness, your Excellencies, ... is ...not just a humanitarian imperative—but an economic and social necessity for our global community. When we deny millions of people the right to a nationality, we not only violate their fundamental human rights but also deprive our societies of their potential contributions. By resolving statelessness, we unlock human potential and drive economic growth. Every citizen represents a unique and potential opportunity for innovation, creativity, and productivity.

Excellencies,

It is well known that Equatorial Guinea does not experience significant influxes of refugees, stateless persons or even IDPs, but my government does commit to engage proactively on... regional migration governance, including the fight against statelessness. As patterns can shift rapidly, influenced by climate change, economic opportunities, or political instability, our approach has been to prepare thoroughly, ...ensuring we have robust systems in place for any eventuality around migration flows. We are working on an unprecedented new law on Forced Displacements and the creation of a Management Centre for Forced Displacements, both to be operational by early 2026.

It is precisely because we are not in the midst of a crisis that we have both the opportunity and the obligation to develop comprehensive, thoughtful, and proactive policies for migration management.

Excellencies,

While we must continue our vital emergency response efforts, we need to emphasize the critical importance of the preventive work. As we provide humanitarian emergency assistance, we must simultaneously strengthen our focus

on the underlying drivers of displacement. Conflict, persecution, human rights violations, climate change, and extreme poverty are not isolated challenges – they are interconnected forces that compound vulnerability and trigger displacement.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Lastly, in a world where humanitarian funding has become increasingly unpredictable and insufficient, and where displacements are no longer temporary but protracted, we must fundamentally reimagine our approach to humanitarian response, especially when displacements extend into years. We must strengthen the sustainability of our humanitarian responses through strategic partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders and systemic integration.

In this context I would like to stress the link between development and displacement – a relationship that manifests at both ends of the migration journey and which encompasses root causes with what I like to call root solutions

On one side, in communities of origin, sustainable development serves as a powerful antidote to forced displacement. By investing in local infrastructure, supporting dialogue, promoting small businesses, and enhancing educational opportunities, communities will become more resilient, offering their members the chance to build meaningful lives where they are.

On the other side stands the imperative of development and inclusion in destination communities, by administering the right protections and ...