

Draft Speech by the Minister of Interior of the Gambia at the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Executive Committee (ExCom) Meeting, 2024.

Excellences, distinguished delegates, ladies, and gentlemen,

It is with great honor that I stand before you today as Minister of Interior of the Republic of the Gambia. I extend my deepest gratitude to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Executive Committee for this opportunity to address such an esteemed gathering. This year's meeting comes at a critical time when global cooperation on refugee protection and humanitarian assistance is more essential than ever.

The Gambia, like many other nations, has faced challenges and triumphs in its efforts to safeguard the dignity and rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons. Despite our limited resources, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to providing refuge to those fleeing conflict, persecution, and natural disasters. The Gambia has a long tradition of hospitality, guided by principles of humanitarian practices and solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the continent.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world is witnessing unprecedented levels of forced displacement. Conflicts in neighboring regions, economic instability, irregular and clandestine migration and climate change led migration are exacerbating vulnerabilities and pushing millions to seek refuge across borders. Thus, Rising sea levels and erratic weather patterns are threatening livelihoods, forcing communities to migrate.

However, these challenges remain immense. Our national systems, including healthcare, education, and social services, are under strain, The Gambia, although small in size, has played its part in responding to these global crises. We have welcomed over 4200 refugees from 21 countries ensuring they find safety and security and inclusion.

The global economic downturn and the effects of climate change have further complicated our ability to extend protection and humanitarian assistance to refugees. Hence, international solidarity and burden-sharing are crucial. I stand with support for international community, to reinforce its support for refugee-hostmanship, particularly the Gambia where resources are often scarce.

Distinguished delegates,

The Gambia is also committed to addressing the root causes of displacement, missing persons and irregular migration; through active engagement in regional peace-building efforts, we strive to contribute to the resolution of conflicts that force people to flee their homes. Our involvement in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping missions is a testament to our commitment to ensuring stability in the sub-region.

The Gambia further calls for more robust global action on climate change, including climate finance mechanisms that support adaptation and resilience-building in developing countries.

Distinguished Delegates,

While we have made progress, we cannot overlook the urgent need for more durable solutions for refugees. The Gambia is working closely with the UNHCR to strengthen resettlement, voluntary repatriation, and local integration programs. We believe that refugees should be empowered to rebuild their lives and contribute to their host communities. We must all work together to create opportunities for them to thrive through education, vocational training, and employment.

I would like to take this moment to commend the UNHCR for its unwavering dedication and tireless work in protecting the rights of refugees worldwide. Your efforts continue to bring hope to millions who have been displaced and on the move.

In conclusion,

Being stateless, Being a refugee is not a choice you make

I reaffirm The Gambia's commitment to upholding international refugee law, as well as our dedication to ensuring that refugees and displaced persons are treated with dignity and respect. We believe that with strong international cooperation, shared responsibility, and genuine solidarity, we can meet the challenges before us.

Let us move forward together, united in our pursuit of a more just, inclusive, and compassionate world for all.

Thank you.

