

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PENDA NAANDA, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF NAMIBIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

DURING THE SEVENTYTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

07-11 OCTOBER 2019

Mr Chairperson
Mr High Commissioner
Your Excellences
Distinguished Delegates

1. Namibia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Africa Group. We thank you Mr chairperson and other members of the Bureau for facilitating and steering our work for 2018/2019, since your election into office last year. Allow me also to congratulate you on the manner in which you are chairing our meetings and be assured of my delegation's support.
2. We thank the High Commissioner, for his statement which gives us an overview of the activities of his office for this period, and we also thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary General for her inspiring remarks.
3. It is an honour for me to address the 70th Session of ExCom on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Namibia. I extend to you Mr. High Commissioner the warm greetings from Hon. France Kapofi, Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration of Namibia. He would have liked to be here with you this week, but he had to take care of another equally important issue regarding our own Nationals being repatriated back home. He has however, requested me to convey this message to you and your dedicated team. My country commends you, and your team for your continued commitment to support refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR Globally.
4. Namibia is very much aware of the complex challenging environment in which UNHCR staff operate in order to extend international protection to all persons of concern to UNHCR. In this regard, Namibia commends UNHCR and its partners for all their tireless efforts in responding to the needs of persons of concern across the world. We pay tribute to all staff who risk their lives daily, in dangerous and unsecure environments to extend international protection to all persons of concerns. Namibia condemns deliberate attacks on humanitarian agents, wherever they take place.
5. My government is concern with the continued increasing numbers of forced displacement in the world particularly the ever-increasing numbers of Internally Displace Persons, Refugees and Asylum seekers. We are equally concerned at the staggering numbers of statelessness. For these reasons, the Government of the Republic of Namibia is fully committed to work with UNHCR and other partners to tackle the root causes. Accordingly, Namibia is party to multiple Conventions aimed at addressing forced displacement and its root causes.

Chairperson,

6. Statelessness deprives basic human rights of persons who find themselves without nationality. Namibia is committed to end statelessness within its borders. Hence a National consultation on acceding to the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and 1961 UN Convention on Reduction of Stateless Persons, as well as the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and the 2009 AU Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internal Displaced Persons in Africa have taken place country wide. The conclusions of, the consultations indicated that the country is ready to accede or ratify the Conventions. In this regard, Namibia is at an advanced stage to conclude the internal process to ratify the Conventions to end statelessness.

7. Accordingly, a National Action Plan 2019 - 2023 on eradication of Statelessness has been developed, and the country is to start collaboration with the neighbouring countries. Equally, the Government has taken a bold decision to exempt persons who came to Namibia from 1930 to 1977 and are being naturalized. Further, for those who came to the country as from 1978 to 1989, their cases are under positive consideration. Namibia is fully committed in ensuring that persons of concerns are protected, supported and their human rights safeguarded.

8. Similarly, Namibia has resolved to fully integrate former Angolan refugees within various communities that they have chosen. While acknowledging with appreciation monetary contribution made available by the UNHCR towards the payment of Permanent Residence Permits, which benefited 123 households out of 429, the Government of Namibia on her side decided to exempt the remaining 306 household whose PRPs could not be paid. To this end, an amount of **Three Million Seven Hundred Twenty-four thousand, Nine Hundred and Thirty-eight Namibian Dollars (N\$ 3 724 938.00)** has been waived. In addition, learners from these households are enrolled in schools within the integrated communities and are equally offered the same free education given to all citizens.

9. Namibia believes strongly on peaceful mechanism to end conflicts and wars in most parts of the world, which are the most cause of refugees and displacement of persons. Equally, durable solutions are the way of ending prolonged refugee status across the globe. Therefore, the Government of Namibia is committed in engaging all member states whose nationals are hosted in the Republic of Namibia, to find durable solutions. *Namibia, therefore, welcomes the ^{holding of the} inaugural Global Refugee Forum, which is scheduled to be held in December 2019.*

Mr Chairperson,

10. Namibia is delighted to report back on the progress made towards the Former Namibian refugees who have been hosted by the Government of Botswana for the past 21 years. After the invocation of secession clause on 31 December 2015, it meant that these Namibians had to return back home under voluntary repatriation to which some did. Unfortunately, for those who failed to sign up for voluntary repatriation had to return back home under the immigration laws of the Republic of Botswana, as per the agreed terms and modalities by the two governments.

Mr Chairperson,

11. The process of returning home by former Namibian refugees was conducted in a phase by phase approach and within the spirit of safety and dignity. The Government of Namibia decided to provide building materials, three-month rations and cash grant for the returnees to settle in a dignified manner in their original communities. An amount of **Ten Million Seven Hundred Forty-one thousand, One Hundred and One Namibian Dollars** (N\$ 10 741 101.00) has been allocated to facilitate their arrival from the Republic of Botswana. Namibia commends highly the people and Government of Botswana for their massive political, social and economic support and cooperation throughout the years.

12. Lastly Mr. Chairperson, Namibia continues to experience an ever-increasing asylum seekers, and the system of support and protection requires additional resources. Given the current situation, and Namibia's commitment to uphold its international obligations, we call upon the UNHCR to re-open its country Office in Namibia, which was closed in 2015. The opening of this Office will facilitate in the implementation of the pledges submitted by my delegation at the 70th session of the Executive Committee.

I thank you!

