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REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

STATEMENT BY ENG. HILARY ONEK, MINISTER FOR RELIEF,

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND REFUGEES

TO

THE 70th SESSION OF UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

OCTOBER 7-11, 2019

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

- Your Excellency the Chairperson of EXCOM,
- Your Excellency, UN High Commissioner for Refugees,
- Honourable Ministers,
- Excellencies, the Heads of Delegations,
- Representative of the United Nations Agencies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join other delegations to thank the outgoing Chairperson for the outstanding contribution to EXCOM and his Bureau and at the same time welcome the incoming Chairperson of EXCOM and wish him well in this assignment.

Uganda remains committed to comprehensive approaches in the refugee response. Uganda was among the first countries to implement the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. Our **Action Plan to Implement the Global Compact on Refugees and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework** puts these commitments into action.

The New York Declaration coincided with what would become Uganda's single largest refugee influx in our history. Today, we host over 1.3 million refugees from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Eritrea and other conflict-affected countries, which makes Uganda not only the largest refugee hosting country in Africa, but also the third largest refugee hosting countries in the world. **Uganda has received over 70,000 new refugee arrivals in the last eight months of 2019. The refugee influx continues in the context of recurring cycles of insecurity and instability in the region. To date, we receive a weekly average of 400 refugees and there are no indications that the situation will be reversed soon.**

We all know too well that the increasing scale, complexity and protracted nature of forced displacement in the region is creating challenges for host communities and tensions over access to basic

services and longer term solutions. The international community should come in quickly to deal with this serious chronic and severe underfunding that is likely to affect our response and hospitality if not addressed.

The Ugandan refugee management model includes an open door policy and approach which provides refugees with land, freedom of movement, equal access to Government-provided social services such as education and healthcare, and the right to work and set up businesses. We have taken on \$50 million USD debt from the World Bank to mitigate the shocks to the vital service delivery systems in the host communities. We are applying an integrated approach, where refugees are included in our national systems through the second National Development Plan for the period running to 2020 through the Settlement Transformative Agenda.

Our non-camp settlement approach is the **foundation upon which we actively promote economic inclusion, resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities** and

ensures that, hosting refugees can positively contribute to overall economic growth and national development.

This model provides refugees with some of the **best prospects for dignity and self-reliance and creates a conducive environment for pursuing development-oriented planning for refugees and host communities.** In furthering our inclusive approach in the national service delivery system, under the CRRF coordination model and with Government leadership, costed response plans on education, on Health and on Water and Environment have been prepared clearly indicating the priority areas of government where the International Community should channel resources in support of the Refugees and Host Communities as part of solidarity and responsibility sharing. The response plan on jobs and livelihood will soon be launched as another great milestone towards strengthening resilience and self-reliance of refugees and host communities.

In order to maintain the civilian character of asylum, we have recently expanded our screening procedures to border points with DRC to ensure that those who seek refuge in Uganda are not only in need but deserve international protection. We have recently inaugurated a new Refugee Appeals Board to strengthen the Refugee Status Determination process and further call upon UNHCR to support Government in these areas. Our goal is to maintain the integrity of our asylum system in the face of the ongoing influx in the region which is sometimes affected by mixed migration movement.

We re-iterate our continued commitment to keep our borders open and receive refugees as a matter of compassion and to provide them with an array of rights to ensure their dignified stay until they feel safe to return to their countries of origin.

We call upon the international community to invest more in addressing **the root causes of forced displacement in the**

region so that refugees can return home in safety and dignity.

Your Excellences, it should be emphasized that the refugee problem is Global and therefore that the search for solutions should equally be global. Uganda has played its part and will continue playing its obligation. The international Community should equally step up its responsibilities that should include among others;

- Strengthening country systems and fulfilling the Grand bargain commitments including increasing the share of third country options as part of the durable solutions.,

Your Excellency Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, on this occasion of the High Level Segment on Statelessness in particular, the Government of Uganda is committed to the process leading to the accession of the 1961 UN Convention on Reduction of Statelessness and efforts are underway in this direction. Uganda acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the Stateless persons in April 1965, but we confirm our resolve to accelerate our

commitments to eradication of statelessness by 2024, through our **National Action Plan to Eradicate Statelessness**. Indeed, this year alone, we have designated a focal point person for Statelessness in line with our obligation under the Brazzaville Declaration. We have held training sessions with Members of Parliament, government officials and civil society to build awareness on these issues.

We are well now positioned to complete a **legal study on statelessness and citizenship** by the end of 2021, to better understand and address the factors leaving certain populations stateless or at risk of statelessness and to support comprehensive legal reforms to this end.

In conclusion, while Uganda reiterates our commitments, we call for full support from all stakeholders in these shared responsibilities which will lead to meaningful changes in the lives of refugees and the host communities and stateless persons.

For God and My Country.



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