



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission



SPECIAL STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT'S DELEGATION TO UNHCR EXCOM GENEVA, SWITZERLAND OCTOBER 3 - 7, 2016

Your Excellency:

It gives me great pleasure to participate in the 67th Session of the Executive Committee meeting.

I bring you greetings from Her Excellency, Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, and congratulate you for handling this important meeting. The Liberian Delegation would equally like to thank the Vice Chairman and other functionaries for their dedicated work in organizing the 67th EXCOM Meeting.

Additionally, the Government of Liberia would like to thank the international community, particularly the UNHCR for the continued support to the refugee program and to the United Nations for its continued support to the security of Liberia since the end of the civil war in 2003 and applaud the efforts of the international community for assisting the Government of Liberia to fight the Ebola virus disease.

We are all aware of the numerous challenges, especially in hot spot zones where inhumane activities are on the rise daily, yet it is the responsibility of all signatories to the Protocols and Conventions on the rights of refugees to remain steadfast in support of UNHCR Staff world-wide, for their timely and unprecedented work in providing assistance to refugees and other persons of concern to UNHCR. Their humanitarian ventures have often been performed under the most difficult conditions.

Let me also take this opportunity to welcome new members, if any, to their first EXCOM Meeting.

Therefore, I shall concentrate on points that are important to our national position.

Mr. Chairman,

As of today's date, an estimated **20,711** Ivorian refugees still remain in Liberia. We are optimistic that **with the ongoing Voluntary Repatriation process, this number will considerably be reduced by the end of 2016. It is hoped that weather and other environmental conditions will not pose any serious problem to the acceleration of the Voluntary Repatriation.**

The Government of Liberia through the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), the government refugee agency has submitted a draft National Action Plan on Statelessness to the cabinet and is pending review and approval for the Government of Liberia to make the issue of Statelessness as part of its national priority.

1. PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT

The Government and people of Liberia battled the Ebola Virus Disease in 2014 and 2015, and is pleased to report that no confirmed case of EBOLA among the refugees has emerged. The refugee population which is currently over **20,711** continues to live in peace and with security within 5 counties in Liberia, with the Ivorian refugee program still receiving care and maintenance. With eminent general and Presidential elections in 2017 and UNMIL drawdown, the Liberian security services have since 01 July 2016 taken full control of the security and protection of all civilians and residents, with in our borders.

2. VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

During the 66th session of the Ex- Com in 2015, the Liberian delegation raised to the High Commissioner and to the Ivorian delegation the concern about the continued closure of the Ivorian border, which had suspended Voluntary repatriation since 2014. In December 2015, after a tripartite meeting with the government of Cote d'Ivoire and UNHCR, voluntary repatriation of Ivorian refugees resumed on 18 December. By the end of December 2015, the total population of the persons of concern to LRRRC and International partners in Liberia stood at **40,121**, comprising **38,428** Ivorian refugees, **1,161** other persons of concern, **46** asylum seekers, **486** refugees of mixed nationality and 1 stateless person in Liberia. The Ivorian refugee population represented 99% of the total; to date (August 2016), about **17,717** Ivorian refugees have been assisted to return against the planning figure of 25,000 refugees in 2016; we expect to have approximately 12,000 Ivorian refugees in Liberia by the end of 2016 if the target set is met. There are some challenges with the Liberian weather and roads, which could hamper return.

The Government of Liberia appreciates the efforts by UNHCR to end the Ivorian refugees' cycle. We request continued support from the High Commissioner to ensure adequate socio-economic development in Cote d'Ivoire and information on these opportunities which would encourage return as well as assistance to the Government of Liberia in addressing critical protection concern for refugees.

It is our ardent hope that the international community will address any security situations in Cote d'Ivoire which would alleviate the fear of return for various reasons expressed by refugees in Liberia and to also assist the Government of Liberia to develop and implement Social - Cohesion programs along border communities of both countries.

As the Ivorian refugee operations reach its promotional phase, we appeal for continue logistical support for the return of refugees in safety and dignity.

3. LOCAL INTEGRATION

Based on the cultural, family ties, and economic activities that have existed even prior to the Ivorian crisis, the Government of Liberia believes not all refugees will choose to return home to Cote d'Ivoire, and there would be a need to locally integrate the remaining population in Liberia. The Government of Liberia has not taken an official decision on the local integration of Ivorian refugees noting past

experience with local integration of former Sierra Leonean refugees which still remains a challenge; though the remaining caseload of some 380 refugees is expected to come to a close by the end of 2016. Though the Government of Liberia (GoL) does not have an official policy on local integration, LRRRC in collaboration with UNHCR plans to ensure the engagement of Liberian Government Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (MACs) and relevant partners at the inception of any developments leading to integration in 2017 and 2018. The Government of Liberia does not have the financial capacity to underwrite the total cost of local integration and therefore looks forward to donor support. Rather it stands ready to assist with technical support in the areas of legal and social aspects of the local integration process for those who will opt for it. LRRRC is already preparing an analysis and road map of activities for both repatriation and local integration.

Recommendations:

- That UNHCR provide support to the ratification of the Liberia Refugee Act (LRA), support for Statelessness Action Plan and the Kampala Convention;
- That UNHCR revisit the support for the Sierra Leonean caseloads both the residual caseload of refugees who opted for Local Integration and the RSD exempted;
- That UNHCR support Government of Liberia in the development of database to help improve protection;
- That UNHCR assist LRRRC to provide Machine Readable Travel Document (MR-CTDs) for refugees;
- That financial and technical support for the development of clear and define policy, program and strategy on local integration for Ivorian refugees;
- That UNHCR observe the various stages of the Ivorian refugee life cycle: voluntary repatriation, promotional repatriation, review of the prima facie, invocation of cessation clause, refugee status determination (RSD) and then, local integration.