

**MULTIPARTITE AGREEMENT FOR THE LOCAL INTEGRATION OF
LIBERIAN AND SIERRA LEONEAN REFUGEES IN NIGERIA**

BETWEEN

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA,

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE,

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA,

THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS), AND

**THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
REFUGEES (UNHCR)**

Recalling the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) annexed to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 428(v) of 14 December 1950 calling upon Governments to cooperate with the High Commissioner for Refugees in the performance of his functions, including the seeking of permanent solutions for the problems of refugees;

Recognizing that local integration is a durable solution for refugees recognized under the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* and its 1967 Protocol or the 1969 OAU *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*;

Mindful that local integration is a sovereign decision and an option to be exercised by States guided by their treaty obligations and human rights principles;

Desirous of facilitating local integration for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees residing in Nigeria on the basis of Article 2 of the 29 May 1979 ECOWAS *Protocol Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment* (the Protocol, A/P.1/5/79)) and supplementary protocols pertaining to code of conduct (A/SP.1/7/85), second phase of Protocol implementation (A/SP.1/7/86), amended dispute resolution provisions (A/SP.1/6/89) and third phase of Protocol implementation (A/SP.2/5/90), consistent with the recommendations of the 1995 Regional Experts Meeting on Sustainable Solutions to Situations of Forced Displacement in West Africa;

Recalling UNHCR's Executive Committee Conclusion on Local Integration No. 104 (LVI-2005), which provides *inter alia* that local integration:

- in the refugee context is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population;
- needs to be undertaken in a manner that sustains the viability of local communities affected by the presence of refugees and that a failure to do so may result in an unreasonable burden being placed on host countries;
- affirms the value of strengthening capacities in host countries as well as of initiatives enhancing the ability of refugee communities to become self-reliant;
- recognizes the positive contributions, including economic benefits, which refugees who integrate locally can make to host countries and communities;

Recalling that the formal UNHCR assistance for voluntary repatriation for Sierra Leonean refugees ended in December 2004 and will conclude for Liberian refugees on 30 June 2007;

Recalling the recommendations of the participatory assessment and planning workshop on local integration for Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in Ogun State, Nigeria held from 14 to 20 March 2007 and subsequent sensitization and awareness campaign conducted to promote cooperation between the host communities and the integrating refugees;

THE PARTIES HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

Responsibilities of the Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone

1. The Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone agree to issue a passport of ordinary duration to those of their citizens who:
 - are of eligible age to receive a passport (underage applicants being included on the passports issued to their parents)
 - have been recognized as refugees by the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (confirmed by UNHCR)
 - have submitted a completed application form together with the required supporting documentation
 - are physically resident in Nigeria at the time of passport issuance
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2. The Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone agree to consider a discounted application fee for the issuance of the passports.
3. The Governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone agree that such passports will generally be issued by their respective representations in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Responsibilities of the Government of Nigeria

4. The Government of Nigeria agrees to consider a discounted application fee for the issuance of ECOWAS residence permits.
5. The Government of Nigeria agrees to place in the passports issued to integrating Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees an ECOWAS residence permit valid for three years. Such permit shall be renewable.
6. The Government of Nigeria confirms that integrating refugees who have been issued ECOWAS residence enjoy, inter alia:
 - full freedom of movement within Nigeria
 - the right to depart from and re-enter Nigeria (provided the holder's passport and ECOWAS residence permit remain valid)
 - the right to work in the formal and informal economies, including through self-employment, subject only to such restrictions as are in place for all ECOWAS citizens residing in Nigeria
 - access to education on the same terms as Nigerian citizens
 - access to health services on the same terms as Nigerian citizens protection against expulsion except in accordance with the provisions detailed in Article

11 of the Protocol, Chapter III of the 1985 Supplementary Protocol (Code of Conduct) and Chapter VI of the 1986 Supplementary Protocol (Second Phase Implementation of Protocol).

Responsibilities of ECOWAS

7. ECOWAS agrees to facilitate the issuance of three years residence permit for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees opting to integrate locally in Nigeria and to monitor compliance with the terms of such issuance for this period and the first period of renewal (i.e. four years).

Responsibilities of UNHCR

8. UNHCR agrees to pay the passport issuance costs agreed between it and the Governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia for the integrating Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Nigeria. Such payment is limited to the integrating refugees described in articles 103 of this Agreement and subject to a deadline agreed between the Parties. UNHCR shall not pay the costs associated with passport renewal or replacement.

9. UNHCR agrees to pay the ECOWAS residence fee costs agreed between it and the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the issuance of ECOWAS residence permits. UNHCR may, upon agreement with the Government of Federal Republic of Nigeria, pay the costs associated with the first renewal of the residence permits. UNHCR will in no event pay the costs of renewal of residence permit beyond the first renewal period.

10. UNCHR agrees to help establish and thereafter monitor the processes required for the issuance of passports and ECOWAS residence permit. In discharging this responsibility, UNHCR will work in close cooperation with the UN Country Team (UNCT).

Implications for Refugees

11. Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees opting to locally integrate in Nigeria will acknowledge that by accepting passports issued to them by their respective countries of origin they are voluntarily re-availing themselves of the protection of those countries. Their status as refugees will thus cease in accordance with Article 1C (1) of the 1951 Convention and the corresponding provisions of Nigerian law.

12. The loss of refugee status through re-availment does not preclude a new claim to recognition as a refugee, including on a *sur place* basis, should conditions arise justifying such recognition under the 1951 *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* or the 1969 *OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*.

Establishment of a Multifunctional Team

11. The Governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, the ECOWAS Commission and UNHCR, assisted in so far as it is willing to assist by the UN Country Team, agree to establish a Multifunctional Team (MFT) to determine the modalities and timing of the transition to ECOWAS residence status for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Nigeria.

12. The MFT will keep all Parties apprised of progress made on the elaboration of the modalities for the transition to ECOWAS residence status. It will provide as necessary recommendations for the implementation of the instant agreement to the Governments involved and UNCT.

13. The official working language of the MTF will be English.

Continued Validity of International Law and other Agreements

14. This Agreement is without prejudice to the obligations of the Parties under international law, specifically the 1951 Convention and its Protocol, the OAU Refugee Convention and human rights law.

15. This Agreement shall not affect the validity of any existing agreements, arrangements or mechanisms of cooperation between the Governments and UNHCR on one hand, and between ECOWAS and UNHCR on the other hand, including any Host Country Agreement. To the extent necessary or applicable, such agreements, arrangements or mechanisms may be relied upon and applied to assist in the pursuit of the objectives of this Agreement, namely the local integration programme.

Resolution of Disputes

16. Any question arising out of the interpretation or application of this Agreement, or for which no provision is expressly made herein, shall be resolved amicably through consultations between the Government or Governments concerned and UNHCR.

Privileges and Immunities

17. Nothing in or relating to this Agreement shall be deemed a waiver, express or implied, of any of the privileges and immunities any of the Contracting Parties enjoys under the applicable legal instruments.

Entry into Force

18. This Agreement shall enter into force on 1 July 2007 upon signature by the Parties.

Amendment

19. This Agreement may be amended by common consent in writing between the Parties

Termination

20. This Agreement shall remain in force until:

- a) completion of the period of residence (including the first renewal of residence if UNHCR agrees with the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to pay such renewal costs) of the Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees opting to locally integrate in Nigeria under the provisions of this Agreement, or
- b) twelve months after the Agreement is repudiated in writing, by one or more of the Parties to it.

In witness whereof, the authorised representatives of the Governments of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, ECOWAS and UNHCR have hereby signed this Agreement.

DONE at Abuja, Nigeria, this ____day of June 2007, in three originals, in English language.

For the Government of the Republic of Liberia:

For the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone:

For the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria:

For the Economic Community of West African States:

For the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: