



ADDIS ABABA COMMITMENT TOWARDS SOMALI REFUGEES

***Adopted at the Ministerial meeting of the
UNHCR Global Initiative for Somali Refugees
(GISR), 20 August 2014, Addis Ababa***

We, the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen, together with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU), have today, Wednesday 20 August 2014, reviewed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the situation of the nearly one million Somalis who remain in exile in the near region¹ as refugees after more than two decades, apart from another one million who are internally displaced.

We appreciate and applaud the hospitality that has been accorded to the Somali refugees by the host countries which have in this time kept their doors open and extended asylum and protection notwithstanding the hardships and sacrifices that are entailed.

Over this time, thousands of Somali refugees found safety and protection in these asylum countries and many have managed to rebuild their lives. Significant numbers have been able to return to their country and were assisted to reintegrate while others were resettled to third countries.

Yet, it is profoundly pre-occupying that today, one tenth of the Somali population remains in protracted exile in the sub-region alone. While essential asylum and protection are available, the majority of the refugees experience unacceptable conditions and face an uncertain future. Food, nutrition, health, sanitation, shelter and other basic needs are in many cases inadequately catered for, while thousands of children are not in school and opportunities for work, employment or other forms of self-realization are limited.

With the majority of the refugees accommodated in camps, freedom of movement is in key respects quite constrained. At the same time, the challenges of hosting the refugees remain compelling ranging from security, law and order, environmental degradation and host

community services and resources which are put under extreme pressure.

While acknowledging that some areas in Central/Southern Somalia have been liberated by Somali National Army and AMISOM forces, more needs to be done to provide basic services. The Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia has reiterated its readiness to receive back home its citizens and some refugees have indeed repatriated spontaneously, however, overall, the conditions for mass repatriation are not yet in existence. The reality of dwindling financial support as well as diminishing international attention as other refugee situations command priority has dramatically compounded the problem.

This protracted and desperate situation in which the lives of thousands of human beings are held in limbo even in their third generation cannot be permitted to continue. The Somali refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) deserve every opportunity to realize full membership to society as a basic right.

A renewed commitment to find telling solutions to this situation is called for. Today, we make this new commitment to assure continuing protection for the Somali refugees and to explore every opportunity for transformative and lasting change for their plight.

In particular, we commit ourselves to:

- i. Maintain our goodwill, assure asylum and international protection for Somali refugees and strengthen the asylum system through ratification, adoption and giving effect to relevant Conventions.
- ii. Take all necessary and feasible measures to address, on one hand, the protection problems facing Somali refugees and asylum-seekers, including human trafficking, smuggling and other problems in the migration/asylum context and, on the other hand, their human, social and economic needs and reduce dependency on relief assistance, build self-reliance and resilience through education, vocational training and income-generating activities and facilitate as normal participation in society as possible.
- iii. Combat the negative perceptions taking ground in some cases against Somali refugees by promoting positive messages on peaceful coexistence of refugees and host communities, reinforcing the

¹ This refers to the 427,812 Somali refugees presently in Kenya, 244,340 in Ethiopia, 233,723 in Yemen, 19,799 in Djibouti and 18,534 in Uganda.

positive contribution refugees have made to host countries, avoiding the stereotyping of refugees as threats to national security and, at large, fostering congenial relations among peoples.

- iv. Work with and support the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia to create conditions that will make voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation of the Somali refugees both feasible and sustainable, take advantage through pilot projects of opportunities to appropriately help spontaneously returning refugees to do so safely and sustainably and support equivalent solutions for internally displaced persons.
- v. Engage with development and regional partners to foster peace, security, law and order and link humanitarian needs and programmes to recovery and development interventions with emphasis on providing basic services, facilities and infrastructure.
- vi. While reiterating that naturalisation is a matter of national sovereignty, explore creative, flexible and other initiatives for alternative stay arrangements, particularly for refugees in protracted exile or who have established enduring links with the country of asylum.
- vii. Work with bilateral and multi-lateral partners to more effectively address host community needs, the consequences of hosting refugees and unique questions such as nomadic agro-pastoralism and transhumance among the Somali refugees.

We express our gratitude to international partners including donors for the support extended towards Somali refugees and Somalia. We further call upon the international community at large, in the spirit of enhanced international solidarity and responsibility-sharing, to embrace and support these new commitments and, in particular:

- i. Extend all forms of support and collaboration to enable Governments to better receive, protect and meet the needs of the Somali refugees while also addressing host community needs and concerns including, but not limited to, environmental degradation.
- ii. Support and collaborate with the Governments in effectively addressing the terrorism and other security threats in the region which could impact

on and potentially harm asylum and international protection for Somali refugees.

- iii. Provide and expand resettlement opportunities to benefit a greater number of Somali refugees, particularly those in protracted situations or with vulnerabilities.
- iv. Provide more adequate financial support to programmes for Somali refugees and for humanitarian needs in Somalia including of the internally displaced persons.
- v. Support conditions that will avoid further displacement from Somalia, especially civilian safety, law and order and, through effective early warning systems and response, mitigate the risk of another drought and enhance conditions that will make repatriation attractive.
- vi. Meaningfully support the capacity of the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia to create peace, security, law and order, social and economic progress and sustainability in Somalia and address humanitarian imperatives.

We underline that, ideally, only a comprehensive, long-lasting and effective solution to the overall political, governance, security, social and economic challenges in Somalia will assure the conditions against new or further displacements and for the sustainable voluntary return home of Somali refugees.

We strongly urge the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia to sustain and increase its political will in resolutely addressing all these problems. The refugees themselves and the Somali diaspora have an important role to play in these efforts and in the other issues highlighted in these commitments and should be facilitated to do so. As regional partners, neighbours, sisters and brothers of Somalia, we shall always stand by them.

We shall work constructively with national, regional and international partners in a regionally coordinated manner to give effect to these commitments as well as the outcomes of relevant sub-regional and regional meetings. Through the coordinating role of UNHCR, a plan of action will be established for the next phases of the Global Initiative on Somali Refugees to its successful completion, including stakeholder consultations, as well as an indicative work plan for implementing its outcomes.