



**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY**

**STATEMENT BY Ms. SEGAKWENG TSIANE
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**AT THE
68TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
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Madam President of the 68th Session of Ex Comm
Your Excellency the UNHCR High Commissioner
Your Excellencies Heads of Delegations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. My delegation and I are pleased to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this 68th Session of the Executive Committee. Let me assure you of Botswana's unwavering support and assistance in the execution of your mandate. Allow me to also extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.
2. Your able leadership has led to the efficient execution of this session. My delegation has noted with particular interest the opening statement of the High Commissioner, the World Bank and the informative case studies presented by the different panelists on Monday. All statements in essence highlighted the work undertaken in the past year and challenges encountered at the country, regional and global levels. Botswana hosts about 3500 refugees and asylum

seekers. While at this point we like to see an escalation of the UNHCR support in the resolution of the Namibian and Zimbabwean refugees case load in Botswana as we believe there no longer exist conflict or security fears of any form in both countries and given the fact that security clearances have been given for the safe return of the citizens of both countries.. We also appeal for a long term solution regarding the situation of refugees from the DRC and Somalia who constitute the highest numbers after Namibia and Zimbabwe.

3. **Madam President**, our mission here from Botswana is to join, discuss and take collective responsibility with other States in the provision of humanitarian response and support to refugees who find themselves having been forced to to flee their homes in search of safety and protection. The Government of Botswana is committed to engaging with the UNHCR in an open and constructive manner in the implementation of CRRF. Needless to say such implementation will be executed within the provisions of our own domestic statutes and

international law, as well as within the context of competing national priorities, in particular youth unemployment and poverty eradication which require a great deal of resources against a shrinking national budget and recorded deficit. We are however encouraged by the statement by the World Bank in terms of financial support which we believe will be designed to meet the context and unique challenges of host countries if we are to realize sustainable solutions and alignment to the SDG goals, which we believe should remain a bed rock for the actualization of the New York Declaration.

4. While, as a country, and a member of the international community of states stand firmly in the support of the ideals of the protection of refugees, we trust that our locally inspired policies of first country of asylum and encampment will be given due recognition and support within the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework . It is our view that both policies fit like hand in glove in the burden sharing and response strategies as well as in achieving an efficient and well

co-ordinated services to the refugee community in Botswana relating to health, education and sustainable household food self-sufficiency.

5. Botswana recognises the important role of the UNHCR in providing protection, assistance and durable solutions to millions of displaced people around the world, particularly in the regions of Africa and other areas that are grappling with emergency situations including conflict. The UNHCR decision to scale down operations in Botswana which will certainly affect our ability to respond to refugee needs.

6. **Madam President,** In accordance with the objectives of the Framework, specifically budget raising and permanent solution, Botswana continues to facilitate refugees who opt to voluntarily repatriate back to their countries in particular those we share borders with. Our view, is that the processes for repatriation should be re-engineered with a view to reduce turnaround time for the people wanting to return to countries so as to eliminate further psychological despondency and

anxiety thereby speed up the process of healing and reconciliation. This element is fundamental for restoring the human dignity of a refugee. In our language we have an adage to the effect that***there is no place like home....***

7. In this context, it is our view that we need, as the UNHCR and members of Ex Com, consider definitive engagement with the UN Security Council and regional bodies like ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC and others for finding long term solutions to the underlying conflicts which are triggers for a refugee problem especially in Africa as well as committing resources for burden sharing and to ensure effective repatriation once positive indicators for the resolution of conflict are established.

8. **Madam President**, following the 2016 New York Summit, the Government of Botswana has intensified its support to refugees. This includes the review of our Refugee Act; implementation of the Court Order issued by the High Court of Botswana relating to the release of rejected asylum seekers from the Francistown Centre

for Illegal Immigrants to Dukwi Refugee Camp; renovation and upgrading of the Dukwi Refugee Camp Clinic to a 4-bed maternity and a 24 hour clinic; increased number of resident medical doctors and interns; increased the number of classrooms for pre-school and the primary education within the Camp as well as collaboration with a local NGO in the provision of skills training. Currently we are in discussion with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a local conservation NGOs regarding a re-forestation and sustainable energy initiative in the Camp. Furthermore, all refugees who have tested positive to HIV are enrolled within the Government programme of 90:90:90 alongside the same protocols accorded Botswana citizens. This is one area where the World Bank funding will be most welcome. My Government has also introduced biometric refugee identity system whereby refugees in Botswana are issued with biometric identity cards, so far close to a thousand refugees have been issued with IDs. It was heartening to note how such a seemingly low key initiative could ignite smiles, and obvious self-esteem amongst those

who received the biometric cards. Sufficient to state however, that we are due budgetary constraints, unable to issue machine readable travel documents to refugees as a result of the prohibitive costs for producing such documents vis-a-vis their numbers.

9. We remain grateful for the technical assistance offered by the UNHCR in Botswana, Botswana Red Cross Society, several I would however like to take this opportunity to request refugee resettlement receiving countries to expedite the needful processes to continue assisting the UNHCR in its resource mobilizing initiatives.
10. **Madam President**, once more I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to working closely with the UNHCR in the implementation of the Global Compact, i.e CRRF.

I thank you.