

**NIGERIA'S STATEMENT AT THE UNHCR 72ND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (EXCOM),
4TH - 8TH OCTOBER, 2021**

Chairperson, ably represented by the Vice Chairperson, The High Commissioner, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is an honour to address members of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at this 72nd Session on behalf of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and commend the High Commissioner and his team for putting this programme together, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nigeria wishes to align itself with the statement made by Burkina Faso on behalf of the Africa Group and the upcoming statement by the OIC under agenda item 6.

2. Since the 2020 EXCOM, Nigeria has continued to provide protection and assistance to persons of concern (refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons), in line with the four-fold objectives of the Global Compact, to ease pressure on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third country solutions and support conditions in countries of origin for voluntary return of persons of concern, in safety and dignity.

3. By May 2021, Nigeria had hosted about 71,400 refugees and 1,600 asylum-seekers, as an average of 300 persons from the neighbouring Cameroon Republic cross over to Nigeria, through unmanned borders points weekly, despite which the security concerns. This is in tandem with the spirit of international solidarity, cooperation and burden sharing as provided in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

4. Permit me to reiterate that Nigeria is committed to the GCR and has taken practical steps to honour this noble initiative since December 2020.

5. Nigeria abolished the encampment policy to allow refugees in transit settlements in Lagos, Benue and Cross Rivers States to live in the host communities, such as in Taraba State, where about 70% of refugees live in host communities, with approximately 30% living in settlements. This is in keeping with the tenets of the GCR on burden sharing.

6. On the pledge to include refugees, IDPs, returnees and their host communities in national, state and local government development plans, Nigeria made a special provision in its Economic Sustainability Plan, to ease implementation of key actions relating to refugees and IDPs. Furthermore, let me also underscore the following projects that have been included in the 2021-2025 Medium Term National Development Plan amongst others:

- a. Under the first phase, construction of Resettlement Cities (400 units of 2-bedroom flats) in Borno, Edo, Zamfara, Katsina and Kano States for

Returnees and IDPs, towards ensuring durable solutions for their shelter have commenced. Construction progress has reached over 80% completion for Borno and Katsina projects; and 65% for Kano. While lands have been acquired for the projects in Zamfara, Nasarawa and Edo States;

- b. Establishment of Migrants/Refugees Resource Centres and Transit Camps in critical locations such as Lagos, Abuja, Maiduguri, Calabar, etc. This will enable refugees have safe and convenient berthing places and facilitate ease of familiarization with their immediate milieu, while contemplating their next line of life actions;
- c. Our PoCs are benefiting from our public educational and healthcare systems; and we are in the process of establishing new of Learning Centres in IDP Camps. In collaboration with the Embassy of Qatar, Nigeria is set to actualise the pilot stage of this project which will expand access to educational services to persons of concern.
- d. Upgrade and expansion of Zonal and Field Offices has enhanced physical presence in critical areas of the country, and facilitated effective and efficient service delivery, with operations being digitalized and technology-reliant;
- e. Establishment of updated database for PoC to collect credible and fairly accurate primary information and statistics, which will facilitate proper planning.

7. On the pledge to strengthen its protection capacity, Nigeria has established the National Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Committee and the National Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Technical Working Group towards providing adequate protection for persons of Concern.

8. In sync with the UNHCR, Nigeria established three new strategic field offices in Taraba, Benue and Cross River States to strengthen the governance structure and facilitate smooth registration of Cameroonian refugees and asylum seekers. Thirteen (13) protection officers were deployed to each of the new field offices to strengthen continuous registration and monitoring.

9. In the first Quarter of 2021, Nigeria began to enrol PoC into the national identity management system, to facilitate access to birth registration and the enrolment. This measure is so to stem the risk of statelessness and facilitate access to services. Henceforth, Refugees and other PoC will be issued the National Identity Number (NIN), to confer legitimacy on PoC and enhance their living in dignity and ease.

10. In 2021, Nigerian Banks and Financial Institutions began to recognize refugee identity card issued by National Commission For Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and UNHCR, and Convention Travel Document (CTD) provided by the Commission and Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) to facilitate their identification banking operations and financial inclusion.

11. In 2021, Nigeria commenced the repeal and replacement of the National Commission for Refugees (NCFR) Act, to incorporate the protection of migrants and IDPs, and ensure inclusivity of relevant views of Humanitarian actors. The draft Amendment Bill will be ready for Presidential assent before the end of 2021.

12. In 2021, Nigeria convened a security Experts Technical Validation Workshop on the Draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum in the Cameroon Refugee Operation. The document will guide the identification of combatants/ex-combatants and their treatment among the Cameroonian refugee population in Nigeria.

13. The commemoration of the World Refugee Day and World Humanitarian Day in 2021 celebrated our POCs and Humanitarian workers, and accorded them appropriate sense of belonging, to further sensitize Governments, philanthropists, international community on the plight of POCs and humanitarian workers.

14. In 2021, the National Policy on Internal Displacement was approved by Nigeria`s Federal Executive Council. The reviewed policy encapsulates the concerns of emerging actors in the humanitarian and social welfare sectors. In this context, an Operating Manual and Action Plan will be developed to ensure seamless operationalization.

15. This month, Nigeria will inaugurate the National Working Group (NWG) on domestication, implementation and monitoring of the Kampala Convention.

16. Nigeria registered and recommended the grant of refugee status to 1, 435 Nigerian asylum seekers in Borno State. The affected persons have been granted their certificates in recognition of their refugee status.

17. In partnership with the UNHCR on Progress V4 Global Registration System, Nigeria has trained many staff of the Commission on how to use UNHCR`s corporate registration and case management data base.

18. Nigeria facilitates and organises regular Town Hall Meetings with PoCs to facilitate inclusive decision making and identify their needs, with a view to providing necessary interventions.

19. In conjunction with UNHCR, Nigeria embarked on sensitization campaigns and advocacies with relevant stakeholders on best practices with respect to handling refugees and asylum seekers.

20. On the pledge to ensure the availability and access to durable solutions for refugees, Nigeria has trained over 500 women in IDP in the production of face masks, and donated skills-practising-starter-packs to numerous beneficiaries across the country. This is addition to useful tools and elements introduced to mitigate the ravaging effects of Covid-19 in all our camps.

21. There are ongoing discussions for inclusion of refugees in our national social safety nets, through the National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO).

22. While refugees in Nigeria have equal and unfettered access to educational and health systems, Nigeria has continued to liaise with relevant stakeholders for support in the educational, health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sectors. This is in addition to the provision of 400 hectares of land to refugees for their settlement and agricultural purposes in Cross River and Benue States.

23. Our government has also launched Project Reliance to provide loans to Returnees, IDPs and other PoCs, to ensure financial empowerment and self-sufficiency and of course the recently launched “Project Zero Hunger” to address the immediate nutritional needs of PoCs and curb food insecurity.

24. Nigeria again demonstrated active and constructive role in regional and sub-regional efforts to address the root causes of displacement, by actively participating in the Third Regional Protection Dialogue on the Lake Chad Basin with focus on conflict resolution and peace building held in 2020.

25. Nigeria initiated Tripartite Agreements between the Republics of Cameroon, Niger and Chad; and the UNHCR for the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees from these countries and facilitate the voluntary return of Nigerians in Cameroon, Niger and Chad, respectively. While the Agreement with Cameroon has been executed and being implemented; that of Niger and Chad are still in the works.

26. In further demonstration of Nigeria’s receptiveness to refugees, the Minister of Federal Capital Territory signed the **#CitiesWithRefugees Declaration**, making Abuja the 267th Refugee friendly City of the World. Before the end 2021, the financial and business capital of Nigeria, Lagos City will also be formally recognized and declared as a “**Refugee- Friendly City**”.

27. Your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria, I wish to seize this opportunity to profoundly appreciate UNHCR in Nigeria for the abiding commitment, collaboration and sterling performance. With the alarming growth rate of forcibly displaced persons in Nigeria

(almost 1 million in only a year), we wish to plead with UNHCR and the international community to support Nigeria in providing durable solutions to our PoCs.

28. The work before us is immense and tasking, and we cannot do it alone. This is why Nigeria has sought the help of local and international collaborators in the humanitarian and development sector for inclusion in local, regional and international plans for inclusion of PoCs in government programs. We are also working with the Nigerian National Primary Health Care Development Agency on vaccine distributions to ensure the most vulnerable in our society have access to the much needed protection against Coivd-19.

29. On this note, I wish to conclude my address by reiterating the unflinching commitment of Nigeria to the fulfilment of her pledges to the Global Compact for Refugees.

30. Thank you.