



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

STATEMENT BY

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**AT THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED
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Chairperson, first and foremost, I bring my best wishes and warm greetings from Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa, to this Conference. I would also like to thank the Government and people of Switzerland for the warm hospitality accorded to all the delegates, since our arrival in this beautiful City of Geneva.

Let me join the earlier speakers in congratulating you, Chairperson, on your appointment to lead the deliberations of the 68th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (EXCOM, 2017). I also wish to convey the Malawi Government's appreciation to the High Commissioner for the wonderful work and support provided in the management of refugee operations in Malawi in the past year.

Your opening statement Chairperson, underscores UNHCR's continued commitment to assist Governments in containing the refugee situation, internally displaced and stateless individuals across the continents.

Allow me, also to thank UNHCR staff for the excellent humanitarian operations worldwide. It is the wish of the Malawi Government that the good work will continue in the years to come. We fully associate ourselves with the statement made on behalf of the African Union (AU).

Chairperson, Malawi acceded to the 1951 UN Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention as a sign of the Government's strong commitment in the management of refugee in our country. Malawi has maintained open borders and has been hosting refugees for over four decades.

Refugees are allowed to stay peacefully, until the conditions are safe back in their respective countries. This was also the case with Mozambican refugees who were in Malawi between 1985 and 1996.

Currently, Malawi is also caring for over 3,200 Mozambican asylum seekers who are being hosted at Luwani ex-Refugee Camp in Neno District in the Southern part of the country. Plans are underway between the Governments of Malawi and Mozambique in collaboration with the UNHCR to promote Voluntary Repatriation of the caseload. A Tripartite Agreement on the matter will be signed soon.

Further to this, there are over 30,000 individuals from Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), among other countries being hosted and Dzaleka Refugee Camp, the main Camp in the country. The refugees are accorded equal rights and protection under the Malawi Constitution and are not restricted from engaging in economic activities within and around the designated areas of residence. Those with rare professional qualifications are recognized and are offered opportunities on issuance of relevant permits.

Meanwhile, Malawi is making strides to include the refugee agenda within the Government's development strategy (MGDS) through the Functional Review of the refugee operations. Funds permitting, it is the Government's desire to enable refugees to become self-reliant and not to rely on food and non-food handouts.

In this connection therefore, we call for financial assistance towards the programme.

We appreciate the support rendered by the cooperating and Implementing Partners. These include: World Food Programme (WFP), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Plan-International, Churches Action on Relief of Development (CARD), World University Service of Canada (WUSC), UNICEF, ACT Alliance, CARE International, and World Vision.

Chairperson, Malawi continues to be concerned with the increased problems of mixed migration. These people avoid officially established border posts and claim to be asylum seekers after being intercepted. We hope to continue strengthening our screening systems in order to curb the malpractice.

The situation has not improved for sometime and currently we continue to receive over 400 individuals every month. This has developed into a protracted situation that might last longer than expected.

Chairperson, the Government of Malawi would like to express deep sense of gratitude to the United States of America, Canada and Australia, among others for allowing the resettlement of some of the refugees from Malawi. We also lobby the refugee originating states in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region to encourage their people to Voluntarily Repatriate. Malawi, being a strong advocate for Voluntary Repatriation as one of the durable solutions, stands ready to facilitate this process.

We also request the international community to pledge more financial resources, for initiating programmes aimed at promoting self-reliance among refugees within Malawi as we promote self reliance among refugees in the country. Through joint collaboration with UNHCR, study visits have been conducted to learn more on the settlement model which could be adopted at the new camp in Katiri, Karonga.

The Government of Malawi is working with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the new camp has a favorable protection environment for livelihood activities to be enhanced. At present plans are underway to ensure that an Environmental Impact Assessment(EIA) and Water Capacity Assessment is conducted at the site.

It is the hope of the Government that the establishment of this new camp will ensure that Dzaleka Refugee Camp is decongested and that all refugees asylum seekers are hosted under favorable conditions.

In conclusion, **Chairperson and Distinguished Members** let me assure the meeting that Malawi remains committed to the management of refugees together with UNHCR and other partners in the best interest of the people we all care for.

I thank you all for your attention.