

MINISTER'S SPEECH – EXCOM 2020

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, HRH PRINCESS LINDIWE DLAMINI AND HEAD OF THE ESWATINI DELEGATION TO THE 71st SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S UNHCR PROGRAMME

Chairperson, I am humbled to be afforded this opportunity to forward the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini's deep appreciation at being invited to the 71th session of the Executive Committee.

The Kingdom aligns itself with the statement of the African group and thanks the High Commissioner, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for pledging UNHCR's commitment to addressing the needs of the growing number of persons of concern.

We appreciate the support extended by UNHCR to Member States on various programs aimed at promoting and protecting rights of asylum seekers, refugees, stateless persons and the internally displaced. The international community is called upon to provide the necessary support to the concerned countries in order to enable them to face the negative impact of these disasters and other root causes for the growing number of people of concern.

His Majesty's Government appreciates, the challenging times that the world is currently experiencing due to the global pandemic, Covid 19, which has taken its toll on world populations and economies. We stand with persons of concern who have been hardest hit by the pandemic and realise how even more vulnerable they have become as they cannot travel freely to places of safety to seek asylum and some who are without proper documentation cannot access social grants offered by some Governments to persons who have lost their means of livelihoods.

This august house presents an opportunity for Member States to engage on best practices on how to create and maintain an enabling environment within which persons of concern can rebuild their lives in peace and dignity while waiting for durable solutions to their problems.

Further, this forum presents a world stage where all players including UNCHR, governments and non - governmental organisations are expected to work together in a spirit of co-operation and not competition to prevent duplication of efforts and to ensure that we achieve one goal of securing the effective protection of the fundamental rights of refugees.

Mr Chairperson, as we are witnessing extraordinary times of displacement in the African region, the Kingdom of Eswatini supports some of the new policies adopted by some pockets of Members States in dealing with matters of concern. There has been a lot of reported cases of xenophobia and internal instability in certain parts of our region and despite all of these, Member States are encouraged to meet their international obligations as by upholding these to protect refugees and asylum seekers.

We are pleased to announce that the Kingdom has ratified most of the Conventions under this area of law and is working tirelessly to domesticate the Kampala Convention and the 2 Statelessness Conventions. The refugees' conventions have already been domesticated and a plan of action on their implementation has been developed.

At last year's GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM, the Kingdom pledged to strengthen our refugee status determination system and we are pleased to announce that the new RSD system will be in line with the New York Declaration in order to best respond to the growing global phenomenon of large movements of refugees and migrants.

We extend our sincere gratitude to UNHCR for providing an online platform for training the decision makers in the asylum system. Likewise, a lot of strides have been taken in implementing the National Action Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Statelessness in the country and the Pledges made during the High Level Event on Statelessness, in 2019. With technical assistance from UNHCR

Pretoria Office, the Kingdom will be conducting a study on the statelessness population so as to determine the extent of the problem. Consultations with key stakeholders, including traditional leaders have been undertaken on issues of prevention and eradicating statelessness.

We are pleased to further announce that during the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Kingdom of Eswatini, along with the Government of Togo, UN Women, the Commonwealth and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality rights, co-sponsored a side event to uphold the equal nationality rights of men and women. We congratulate the Government of Togo in coming up with a proposed law which seeks to remove gender discrimination in their nationality laws.

The Kingdom has also initiated a number of legislative reforms which seek to remove gender discrimination in law and practices. Further, we are working tirelessly in identifying areas other gaps in our asylum systems so as to build upon strong foundations for the protection of refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups using the good foundations set internationally.

In conclusion, His Majesty's Government commits to continue to dedicate more resources to ensure an enabling environment within which asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons are treated with dignity and respect as they purpose to rebuild their broken dreams.

With these remarks the Kingdom stands firmly with the theme – every action counts.

I thank you.