



**REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**STATEMENT  
BY  
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**MINISTER OF JUSTICE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 73<sup>RD</sup> SESSION  
OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONERS FOR REFUGEES  
PROGRAMME (EXCOM)**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

**10 - 14 OCTOBER 2022**

**Mr. Chairman,  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

1. I have the honour to deliver this Statement on behalf of the Government and people of Botswana. The delegation of the Republic of Botswana is pleased to join other delegations at this important forum in order to address the plight of refugees. Our delegation would like to assure you of our full cooperation during this ExCom session. Botswana aligns herself with the Statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Chad on behalf of the African Group.
2. I wish to commend the Chairperson for ensuring that the business of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme continued even at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and High Commissioner for Refugees, for the excellent facilitation which enabled us to participate virtually for the past two ExCom sessions.
3. **Mr. Chairman,** Botswana wishes to express her appreciation for the review by the UNHCR of the decision to close its office in Botswana and continue to operate, albeit at a reduced staffing level. I cannot overemphasise the importance of the presence of UNHCR at the Dukwi Refugee Camp. The collaboration between Government of Botswana and the UNHCR in the Camp has enabled the effective implementation of joint activities that promote the protection and welfare of refugees and asylum seekers. These include among others livelihoods projects, prevention of

and the response to gender-based violence and other social ills. The involvement and active participation of the UNHCR Field Office in Dukwi has been pivotal in this respect.

4. **Mr. Chairman,** Botswana experiences challenges of “onward movement” of asylum seekers from neighbouring countries. These are persons who are recognized refugees and were already afforded international protection, and some are those who sought asylum but left their respective camps before they underwent refugee status determination. Though it is allowable for a person recognized in one State to claim asylum in another State, onward movements often results in process inefficiencies, administrative duplication, delays, and significant costs to all States concerned. The situation is tantamount to abuse of the asylum system and does not promote burden sharing among States. In this regard, we are in discussion with the Office of the Regional Representative in Pretoria, South Africa, in order to determine feasible and durable solutions for this caseload, and we therefore look forward to the resolution of this problem.

5. **Mr. Chairman,** there are positive steps accomplished in Botswana towards the welfare of asylum seekers. For a long time, people arriving in the country seeking asylum were housed in the Francistown Centre for Illegal Immigrants to await refugee status determination. I am happy to inform that one hundred (100) housing units have been refurbished in Dukwi Camp to house asylum seekers. This avails access to services that are enjoyed by all refugees in the Camp. At the Francistown Centre for

illegal Immigrants twenty (20) units have been refurbished to accommodate rejected asylum seekers to stay in family units while they are being processed by Immigration officials. This is a positive milestone in refugee welfare.

6. **Mr. Chairman,** following the significant decrease in the incidence of COVID- 19 cases worldwide, and the subsequent relaxation of the restrictive protocols pertaining to travel, we have observed an interest among refugees to take up voluntary repatriation. To this end, three (3) Ugandans, two (2) Ethiopians and one (1) Namibian have been facilitated to return to their countries of origin safely and in dignity. We are also in the process of facilitating the return of some refugees from Burundi and Uganda. Botswana remains committed to ensuring that voluntary returns are facilitated swiftly and in line with the set protocols.
7. In conclusion, I wish to express Botswana's appreciation for the technical support provided by UNHCR South Africa and Multi-Country Office (SAMCO), and we look forward to our continued collaboration in the coming year. I wish to assure you of Botswana's commitment to addressing the needs of refugees during these difficult global and financial economic times.
8. We therefore would like to join other delegations in thanking all donors who have actively contributed to enable the UNHCR to execute its mandate. It is indeed critical for the international community to intervene expeditiously in conflict situations, which are a fundamental cause of

mass human flight. I wish you success as you preside over the deliberations of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme.

**9. I thank you for your attention.**