

MINISTER'S SPEECH – EXCOM 2019

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, HRH PRINCESS LINDIWE DLAMINI AND HEAD OF THE ESWATINI DELEGATION TO THE SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S UNHCR PROGRAMME, 2019

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 70th session of the executive committee, and by extension bring greetings from his Majesty's government.

The Kingdom aligns itself with the sentiments shared by the High Commissioner for Refugees in his opening address on why statelessness should be addressed. This is a time where-in representatives of Governments, observers and Non-Governmental Organisations gather to seriously reflect on the challenges faced by children, women and men who through no fault of their own find themselves homeless in the most brutal and insensitive manner.

Chairperson, the Kingdom of Eswatini has over the years demonstrated a very strong commitment to the asylum institution by dedicating considerable resources towards protection and promoting livelihoods of asylum seekers, refugees and stateless

persons. The Kingdom pledges to continue with this selfless act for as long as this situation persists.

This year Africa is commemorating the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU refugee convention) as well as the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention). Chairperson the we are proud to state that Kingdom has signed and ratified both Conventions. Further, the OAU Refugee Convention has been domesticated through the Refugees Act No.15 of 2017.

The theme of the 50th anniversary of the OAU Convention and the 2009 Kampala Convention Commemoration focuses on establishing the root causes and achieving durable solutions with specific emphasis to refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPS) and returnees which is something that we should all be focusing on. I may therefore, add that the Kingdom of Eswatini is fully committed towards implementing the AU decisions on these issues and we fully align ourselves with the sentiments shared by Zimbabwe.

The Kingdom has taken long strides in preventing and eradicating statelessness such as being signatories to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on Statelessness, appointing a Focal Person and adopting a National Action Plan to eradicate statelessness.

Chairperson, the National Action Plan is in line with the Global Action Plan to end statelessness by 2024. This plan has since been approved by the Eswatini Government which marks a mile-stone towards the eradication of stateless persons in the Kingdom. The action plan and the pledges that the Kingdom has committed to will ensure that as a country we play our part in the eradication and prevention of new cases of statelessness globally. Our Cabinet has appointed a Task Team to be headed by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister to spear head the implementation of the plan.

Lastly, the Kingdom wishes to pledge its support for a regional declaration and action plan to end stateless with the SADC Region, so that we are not left behind as a region.

On another note, the Kingdom of Eswatini is pleased to report that the Eswatini Refugee Act of 2017 is currently being implemented with technical assistance from UNHCR Pretoria Regional Office. The new law ensures that asylum applications are processed timeously in much more efficient and effective.

His Majesty's Government therefore 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.

Chairperson by way of conclusion, I wish to pay a special tribute to the people we are about here - **Refugees and stateless persons.** I take this opportunity to salute their resilience, their indomitable spirit, their ability to hope, often times against hope itself. Their determination to survive despite tremendous odds is highly admirable.

As key decision-makers we need to play ours by ensuring, in meaningful terms that we create and maintain a conducive environment within which they can rebuild their lives in peace and dignity whilst they wait in hope, for the swords to return to their sheaths. By refusing to be deterred by the challenges and opting to concentrate on the positives, they give us enough reason to celebrate the triumphing of the human spirit over adversity.

With these remarks the Kingdom stands firmly with the theme take a step #with refugees

I thank you.