



**SOUTH AFRICA'S PLEDGE AT THE
GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR
REFUGEES (UNHCR)**

17 DECEMBER 2019

SWITZERLAND, GENEVA

Check Against Delivery

Chairperson,

Your Excellency, the High Commissioner for Refugees,

(Excellencies, Heads of State and Government)

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

From the onset, I wish to extend a word of appreciation to the High Commissioner and his team for organising this august and timely gathering that seeks to encourage Member States and other stakeholders to enhance cooperation in addressing the plight of displaced persons, particularly refugees.

The Global Refugee Forum under the GCR (Global Compact on Refugees) is a significant milestone and a welcome practical step in addressing the challenges that arise from persons leaving their homes and seek sanctuary in foreign territories.

This Forum should be inspired by the words of Nelson Mandela, the founding father of our nation when he said; 'This must be a world of democracy and respect for human rights, a world freed from the horrors of poverty, hunger, deprivation and ignorance, relieved of the threat and the scourge of civil wars and external aggression and unburdened of the great tragedy of millions forced to become refugees'.

It is in this spirit that South Africa in addition to already provided health care, education and social services to refugees, pledges to complete the full roll out of the newly developed live capture biometric information system to issue Refugee Smart ID Card and Refugee Travel Documents across all nine provinces by 2024. The commencement of this roll out is earmarked for April 2020.

This initiative will ensure that recognised refugees are in possession of secured documents that are recognised by institutions across sectors with same security features as those of citizens, and are easily accessible closer to where refugees reside with significantly improved turn-around time on their production. In a nutshell, this initiative will eradicate the plight of waiting long periods, security concerns by other sectors like banking, whilst bringing services closer to refugees.

These efforts are part of Government's drive to ensure that the systems that record identity and status of persons in the country are well secured and modernized. Therefore, our pledge is part of the roadmap that the Government is already undertaking to ensure that all citizens and persons in its territory are properly documented.

In addition, South Africa will continue working with Member States within the region to share and exchange best practices on areas like early birth registration to eliminate statelessness and the use of technology to retain a credible national population registry, amongst others.

Chairperson,

My delegation assures this gathering and the UNHCR that South Africa is committed to play her part in dealing with the challenges of displacement guided by the values of Ubuntu.

I thank you.