



LESOTHO

STATEMENT BY H.E THABANG MATJAMA

AT

**THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S
PROGRAMME (EXCOM)**

OCTOBER 2022

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

THANK YOU, Madam Vice-CHAIRPERSON,

HIGH COMMISSIONER,

HONORABLE MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS,

YOUR EXCELLENCIES AMBASSADORS

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

1. Lesotho aligns itself with the statement of the African Group delivered by Ambassador Makaila on the opening day of the session. We also deposit our warm congratulations to the High Commissioner Mr. Filippo Grandi on the extension of his mandate. It is an enormous honor and privilege for me to speak at the 73rd session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner for Refugees on behalf of the Kingdom of Lesotho.
2. We express our gratitude to the UNHCR for facilitating the continuation of this auspicious event and congratulate their commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to people in need when they are in vulnerable situations.

3. Lesotho is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, 1967 Protocol, the 1969 OAU convention, 2009 AU Convention on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (KAMPALA CONVENTION) and has not made any reservations, which in principle allows refugees the freedom to study, seek legal employment and access to all public services including medical assistance.
4. According to the Kingdom of Lesotho's Refugee Act of 1983, the Government through the Ministry of Home Affairs established Refugee Coordinating Unit (RCU) to demonstrate commitment to addressing the issues of Refugees.
5. In 2022, The Kingdom of Lesotho received additional five (5) refugees from DRC who were resettled from the Comoros with the assistance from UNHCR.
6. The Kingdom of Lesotho is further pleased to announce that more refugees continue to be naturalize as citizens, courtesy of reduced fees payable towards naturalization by refugees who choose to fully integrate and become citizens of Lesotho. Refugee children continue to graduate from institutions of higher learning as two refugees graduated with a diploma in

electrical installation on the 1st October 2022 while three more will graduate in November 2022.

7. To enhance the support provided to refugees, Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) signed agreements with civil society organizations such as a tripartite agreement (PPA) between MOHA, UNHCR and Skillshare Lesotho, a civil society organization. Through this PPA, Skillshare Lesotho will among others provide education, case management, social protection, and livelihood services to refugees.

Madam VICE CHAIRPERSON,

8. To fast track determination of refugee status, the Kingdom of Lesotho under the Ministry of Home Affairs in partnership with Skillshare Lesotho is the process of conducting three (3) Refugee Status Determination (RSD) meetings of the Interministerial Committee for the Determination of Refugee Status. This will assist with adjudicating backlogs pending files for adjudication by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
9. Furthermore, The Kingdom of Lesotho is appreciative of the financial and technical support received from UNHCR including study on displacement which will inform both legal and policy

framework in the Kingdom of Lesotho which has been facing displacement challenges due, among others, to violence which manifested itself in tit-for-tat killings as a result of illegal mining in the Republic of South Africa. Displacement is further exacerbated by fights between rival famo music (local Basotho music) gangs who fight over market. The support has gone a long way in alleviating the plight of both refugees and the persons of concern in Lesotho.

Madam Vice CHAIRPERSON,

10. We recognize that diseases such as Ebola among other pandemics are a roadblock that has created difficulties in nations that are hosting refugees. The people in question have been severely affected; some have lost their means of support, while others have been compelled to leave their homes because they lost their jobs and now depend on government for daily survival, and still others have been made to return to reception centers with constrained space. This calls for increased support and allocation of resources to support persons of concern to lessen the already insurmountable challenges on their shoulders.

11. Aligning national priorities, and needs of host communities with UNHCR priorities and expectations remains a challenge. While the Government of Lesotho has tried its best to harmonize the various interests, more technical and financial support is required to put in place tools, structures, mechanisms, and services that will help address the challenge.

12. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank UNHCR for its efforts and commitment to the fight against the financial challenges that were created by COVID-19 that scientifically affected the lives of refugees and those seeking asylum. Unfortunately, work well done means more work to be done. We still have significant unmet needs in the refugee program that require more financing and technical support.

13. Finally, The Kingdom of Lesotho wants to reassure the High Commissioner that it is committed to the idea of burden and responsibility sharing. We take seriously our international obligations and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the protection of Persons of concern.

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ALL!

KHOTSO PULA NALA