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GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

STATEMENT BY

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HOMELAND SECURITY AND COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

**AT THE 70TH SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOM), 2019**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

7TH TO 11TH OCTOBER, 2019

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The Deputy Secretary General – Ms Amina Muhamed,

The Chairperson of this Year's EXCOM – Your Excellency Mr. Boudjemaa Delmi,

Your Excellency the High Commissioner – Mr. Filippo Grandi,

Honourable Ministers,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentleman.

First and foremost, I bring best wishes and warm greetings from Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa. I would like to thank the Government and people of Switzerland for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to my delegate since our arrival in this beautiful City of Geneva.

Let me join the earlier speakers in congratulating you, Chairperson, on your appointment to lead the deliberations of the 70th Session of the EXCOM-2019. Let me also convey the Malawi Government's appreciation to the High Commissioner for the cooperation and support provided to Malawi in the management of refugee operations in the past year.

Your opening statement Chairperson, and that of the High Commissioner, you underscore UNHCR's continued commitment to assist Governments in managing the refugee situation, internally displaced persons and deal with statelessness globally.

In a special way, allow me to thank the UNHCR, particularly the Malawi Office and the Regional Office in Pretoria, South Africa for the excellent humanitarian operations in Malawi. It is therefore the wish of the Malawi Government that the good work will continue in the coming year.

The Malawi Delegation also fully associates itself with the statement made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC) in this regard.

Chairperson, by acceding to the 1951 UN Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention, the Malawi Government made a strong commitment in the management of refugees and asylum seekers within the country's territory.

Malawi maintains open borders and currently hosts about 42,561 individuals as at August 2019. The majority of the cases are from the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa. The PoCs are hosted at Dzaleka Refugee Camp, with some living within the communities in the urban and rural areas of the country.

All refugees enjoy equal rights and protection under the Malawi Constitution. They are not restricted from engagement in economic activities especially those with rare professional qualifications and skills. Some are employed in various sectors on issuance of relevant permits.

We appreciate the support rendered by the Implementing Partners. These include: World Food Programme (WFP), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Plan International-Malawi, Churches Action on Relief of Development (CARD) and World University Service of Canada (WUSC).

Chairperson, our food distributing agency in Malawi, WFP has been experiencing challenges to fulfill the monthly food rations in 2019. Food has been provided at half ration since May and the situation seems not to improve.

I would like to acknowledge that the problem of inadequate food is partly exacerbated by the encampment policy which has over the years condemned able bodied men and women into queuing for handouts which has led to low self-esteem.

Chairperson, Distinguished delegates; on another note, Malawi has registered a number of achievements in the current year, namely:

(a) In April, 2019 Malawi adopted the *Prima Facie* Refugee Status Determination procedure for asylum seekers from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the North and South Kivu Provinces and the Katanga Region.

The adoption was done through a Declaration by the Minister of Homeland Security under Section 7(3) of the Refugees Act. That means all asylum seekers from the Regions mentioned, may seek refuge in the Republic of Malawi on *Prima Facie* basis.

(b) On statelessness, the Malawi Government is aware that 2019 marks the mid-point of **UNHCR #I Belong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024** and that UNHCR will convene a Global High Level Meeting on Statelessness during this year's EXCOM to assess achievements made to date.

Malawi is aware that it did not make statelessness pledges in 2011 during a similar meeting, and this year has made a number of pledges to address statelessness in the remaining 5 years of the #I Belong Campaign.

Malawi views ending statelessness as one of the outcomes of its refugee management strategies and must be pursued with vigor because it's a stain on our conscious. In order to facilitate the involvement of PoCs in economic activities the Government linked one Bank to open a branch at Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

The Malawi Government has also realized that it has allowed a very useful resource to go to waste instead of tapping into the talents that refugees possess. We therefore have termed ending statelessness as our vehicle for unleashing on Malawi the latent potential that reside in PoCs for the development of the country.

(c) On the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), Malawi amongst other UN Member States adopted the New York Declaration in 2016 and adopted the CRRF in 2018.

At the UNGA Summit in 2018, the Malawi Head of State made a statement to reiterate Malawi's commitment towards the management of refugees and migrants within the framework of the CRRF.

Malawi has therefore made pledges in the following areas; Incorporation of Refugee issues into the National Development Agenda, Law Reform, Registration and Documentation, and Livelihood activities.

Malawi has also completed the drafting of the CRRF Roadmap that will be adopted soon. We also carried out a skills survey which enabled us to start issuing work permits to qualified refugees so that apart from integrating them they also contribute to the development of the country.

Above all this, Malawi submitted her application for EXCOM Membership through the normal Diplomatic channels and we are waiting for the positive feedback from the office of the High Commissioner.

Chairperson and Distinguished Delegates, in conclusion; let me assure the meeting that Malawi remains committed to the effective management of refugees together with UNHCR and other partners, in the best interest of the people we care for.

I thank you all for your attention.