



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY

STATEMENT BY

**THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY**

MS. MATSHIDISO DORCAS BOKOLE

**AT THE
GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM**

**GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
17 – 18 DECEMBER 2019**

Mr. Chairman

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of the Government of Botswana, I am pleased to join other distinguished delegates in appreciation for the opportunity to speak at this first meeting of the Global Refugee Forum; where my country will share her modest efforts in addressing the plight of refugees.
2. Mr. Chairman, while Botswana is host to a small number of refugees, it fully remains committed to protecting, supporting and finding durable solutions to those forced to flee their countries of origin. The protection offered is done within the provisions of international and domestic laws.
3. Botswana welcomes the Global Compact on refugees as it encourages cooperation and burden sharing in meeting the immediate needs of refugees. To this end, Botswana continues to facilitate refugees who voluntarily opt for repatriation to their countries of origin. During this year, 2019, one hundred and fifty-nine (159) Zimbabwean nationals voluntarily registered to return home while thirty-nine (39) Namibians, two (2) Ugandans, two (2) Burundians

and one (1) person each from Rwanda and South Sudan respectively, also voluntarily repatriated to their countries of origin. We will continue to encourage refugees to return to their homeland only when it is safe and conducive for them to do so.

4. Mr. Chairman, you will recall that in 2015 the cessation clause was invoked on Namibian refugees and I am happy to announce that in September 2019, after several attempts, seven hundred and seventy (770) former Namibian refugees were returned in safety and dignity to Namibia. Currently, Botswana does not host any refugees from Namibia, and the Tripartite Agreement that was signed by the Government of Botswana, the Government of Namibia and the UNHCR has since been dissolved.
5. In another positive development, Botswana is working with the Republic of Zambia to draw a Memorandum of Understanding in burden sharing because Botswana experiences arrival of individuals seeking refuge who transit Zambia. The Memorandum of Understanding will provide a framework for attaining sustainable solutions to refugee situations in a more predictable, equitable, and responsibility-sharing way.

6. Mr. Chairman, Botswana is concerned about the increasing number of unaccompanied children who arrive in the country, mainly from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Best Interest Determination assessments and reports are done and all of those children are given foster care while family tracing and re-unification processes continue.
7. On a more positive note, the children who were previously housed with their parents at the Centre for Illegal Immigrants following unsuccessful applications for asylum by their parents, have together with their families been released to the Refugee Camp where they are now attending school and have access to other amenities.
8. In conclusion, Botswana remains grateful for the technical assistance offered by the UNHCR at the Regional and Country offices. Resettlement and Complimentary Pathways are offered to refugees whose countries are not conducive to return to. Training on Refugee Status Determination (RSD) is offered to members of the Refugee Advisory Committee that assesses applications for asylum.

9. The UNHCR has also pledged support for the review of our law governing refugees to align it to international standards. Botswana commits to finalizing the draft Bill and submitting it to Parliament during 2020. This we believe will ensure that there is alignment with the current refugee response framework.

10. Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to doing all that is necessary to comprehensively respond to and ease the plight of refugees and displaced persons.

11. I thank you.