

**STATEMENT READ ON BEHALF OF THE HON. ABROSE DERY, MINISTER FOR THE INTERIOR, REPUBLIC OF GHANA, AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 71<sup>ST</sup> SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (EXCOM) OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES HELD IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, 5<sup>TH</sup> – 8<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2020**

Your Excellency Chairperson of EXCOM,

I begin by commending the Chairperson for the able manner with which he has conducted this session so far. Chairperson, you can count on the support of Ghana towards the success of this session.

Chairperson, Ghana fully aligns itself with the remarks made by Algeria on behalf of the African Group.

**1. Measures Taken To Mitigate The Effects Of The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly taken its toll on refugee-related activities in Ghana. Government however reacted quickly and effectively to alleviate the suffering brought on refugees and Ghanaians at large by the pandemic. In this regard, Government made water free for all residents including refugees, from April 2020. The provision of free water, which is to last till end of 2020, makes it easier for all persons in Ghana, including refugees, to abide by the handwashing and other personal hygiene protocols prescribed by health authorities for containing and preventing the spread of COVID-19. In addition, the Government of Ghana has made electricity free till the end of 2020, for users who fall in a category described as “lifeline users” – a category to which refugees generally belong.

Ghana has instituted a number of practical measures to ensure that, despite the stringent COVID-19 restrictions, refugee status determination (RSD) has continued uninterrupted. Thus, COVID-19 has not adversely impacted the waiting period for RSD. These measures include the use of video conferencing, where the facility is made available to asylum applicants in a separate location from the Eligibility Officer. This has been touted as best practice worthy of emulation by other operations. Furthermore, the backlog for RSD in Ghana has been significantly reduced notwithstanding COVID-19.

**2. Inclusion and Solutions**

Mr. Chairperson, I am happy to inform you that despite the closure of our borders, the rights of asylum seekers and refugees in Ghana, as spelt out in all international protocols and legal instruments to which Ghana is a signatory, have been respected while safeguarding public health. Ghana will continue to respect and protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

Your Excellency, Ghana continues to seek durable solutions for refugees who find themselves in a protracted situation. To this end, the Ghana Immigration Service continue to renew the residence permits and work permits for former Liberian refugees affected by the Cessation Clause nearly a decade ago, but who remain in Ghana as Liberian nationals legally resident in Ghana. We will continue to explore options for providing permanent solutions for refugees.

As part of improving livelihood opportunities and solutions for refugees, Government continues to work towards making available the Ghana Card to all refugees. The provision of the card to refugees will ensure their inclusion in the economic and social activities of the country, thereby significantly improving the lot of refugees.

**3. Conclusion**

Mr. Chairperson, Ghana will continue to work with the UNHCR in finding solutions to the issues of mutual concern.

I thank you for your attention.