



STATEMENT BY H.E. DR. CLEOPA MAILU, EGH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN GENEVA DURING THE 71ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME (EXCOM) 5TH - 9TH OCTOBER, 2020

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
The High Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. Let me begin by commending you Mr. Chairman on your able stewardship of this Session of the Executive Committee. I assure you of Kenya's full support.
2. Kenya aligns itself with the statements delivered by Algeria, and Azerbaijan, on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

3. 2020 is a historic year.
4. Not only are we commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Statute of UNHCR, but also celebrating seventy-five years of the United Nations, the bedrock of the rules-based international order.
5. However, we are doing so, amidst the great challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, the worst calamity to befall humanity since the Second World War.
6. The unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have reverberated all across the planet, affecting every aspect of life. From our work here in Geneva, to the search for durable solutions for the millions of forcibly displaced persons, we all now have to ascribe to the new normal.

Undoubtedly, these impacts will, unfortunately, remain with us for years to come.

Mr. Chairman,

7. What should have been a robust year, hot on the heels of the first ever Global Refugee Forum, in December, 2019 with states looking forward to the implementation of the pledges made, has instead been one that has tested humanity and stretched humanitarian action beyond measure.
8. Nevertheless, Kenya commends UNHCR for its remarkable efforts in continuous follow-up engagements to the Global Refugee Forum. The regular virtual briefings on progress made demonstrate UNHCR's unwavering resolve to ensure that the international community remains on-track in realizing the goals set out in the Global Compact of Refugees.
9. Kenya, appreciates the remarks made by the High Commissioner during the opening ceremony on Monday morning. Kenya particularly acknowledges UNHCR's support of host governments in response to the COVID/19 pandemic with stepped up health, water and sanitation responses, as pointed out by the High Commissioner.
10. Additionally, Kenya applauds UNHCR for its commitment to stay and deliver, in these most difficult of times, and expresses its deepest sympathies to UNHCR and the families of the five personnel who lost their lives due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chairman,

11. We take note that the High Commissioner's Dialogue in December this year, will provide an opportunity to discuss the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on international protection and durable solutions.
12. Nevertheless, please allow me to highlight a number of challenges that we have encountered as a major refugee host country, in this regard.

13. As you are aware, Kenya continues to host a large number of refugees from the region, with the number now at approximately **498,422**. This has been a long-standing tradition, a testimony of Kenya's impeccable humanitarian credentials.
14. Due to the border closures and movement restriction, resettlement to third countries has been significantly hampered. Furthermore, voluntary repatriation opportunities have diminished considerably. The statistical evidence is clear, not just for us, but globally as a whole. Kenya expresses optimism that in the spirit of the Global Compact of Refugees, renewed efforts in the pursuit of voluntary repatriation and resettlement will be enhanced in due course, as the conditions improve.
15. The urban refugees in Kenya have lost livelihoods, as a result of the measures put in place to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. While Kenya has taken note of the stepped up efforts by UNHCR to increase its cash based interventions in this regard, we have noted an increase in the number of urban refugees returning to the camps. This will highly likely increase the congestion in the camps, making it even more difficult to ensure health and sanitation measures.
16. Additionally, secondary movements of refugees have been noted, where refugees have moved from their first country of asylum to seek asylum in Kenya.
17. Kenya stresses that the disproportionate burden borne by refugee host countries, many of whom are developing nations, risks compounding the dire situation even further due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
18. In this regard, therefore, and in conclusion, Kenya calls upon the international community, in the spirit of burden and responsibility sharing, the clarion call of the GCR, to re-double its efforts in responding to the UNHCR COVID-19 Appeal and to enhance un-earmarked funding to UNHCR so as to ease the pressure on refugee host countries, such as Kenya. In the same vein, we appreciate the efforts of the development actors, who have

provided grant funding to refugee host countries. We encourage them to continue with this approach given the harsh reality that the pandemic is likely to linger on for some time to come. Grant funding will not only benefit the refugees but also the host communities in the humanitarian-development nexus approach.

I thank you for your attention.