



## **STATEMENT DELIVERED BY UGANDA ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE AT UNHCR EXCOM69**

**Delivered by : Hon. Hilary Onek; 1 October, 2018**

High Commissioner,  
Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Uganda has the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.
2. The Group takes note of the statement by the High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as the key note address delivered by Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, the Executive officer from the World Bank, and makes the following remarks;
3. The Group commends UNHCR and its partners for all their tireless efforts in responding to the needs of persons of concern to UNHCR across the world. We pay tribute to all UNHCR staff who risk their lives daily, in dangerous and

unsecure environments to extend international protection to all persons of concern. The Group condemns deliberate attacks on humanitarian workers, wherever they take place, and urges all actors to refrain from such actions.

4. The Group believes that comprehensive response to persons of concern cannot be achieved without concerted international response. Currently developing countries host about 85% of the world's refugee population. Of these, the largest total refugee population is hosted in the African Continent. African countries continue to leave their doors open to those seeking refuge amidst existing national funding challenges.
5. The Report on UNHCR's operations in Africa indicates that as at the end of August 2018, the voluntary contributions received for activities on the continent represented only about 18% of the needs in the region. Chairperson, only 48% of the budget was funded in 2017, leaving 51% of the needs unfunded. This is of great concern to the Group, considering that the Region continues to host the largest numbers of persons of concern to the Organisation.
6. The current funding to the region is not proportionate to the persons of concern hosted in the region. Considering the spirit and intent of the GCR which will be adopted later this year, the 3% reduction in the budget for Africa for the year 2019 is unsettling. This does not match the generosity of host countries in the region. To this end, the Group expresses concern for lack of sufficient information from the UNHCR on the basis for the reduction of the budget.

7. As a result of this chronic underfunding, UNHCR is forced to prioritize the immediate life-saving activities over sustainable activities and solutions needed on the continent. This has affected humanitarian response in a many sectors including; healthcare, environment, education, portable water, food and shelter, which has led to disquietness in some refugee settlements. International protection accorded to refugees should include provision of stability, which enables displaced persons preserve their dignity. But without the requisite budgetary resources, the response falls short of the minimum requirements for displaced populations who are dependent on humanitarian assistance.
8. We would like to recall that the principles of international cooperation and solidarity are at the core of the international protection regime and should continue to guide our collective response to persons of concern. The Burden for refugees should not be disproportionately borne by a few host states neighboring conflict areas. In this regard, we should appreciate an increase of tangible commitments from the international community to provide increased regular, flexible and predictable funding to respond to the needs of refugees and their host communities in Africa.
9. Chairperson, the Group takes note of initiatives undertaken by the secretariat to try and address this funding gap on refugee response by the Organisation. We welcome the initiatives taken to broaden the donor support base, including by; mobilising the private sector and development actors.
10. The broadening of the support base to include development actors in refugee response is a welcome

development. However Chair, the Group reiterates its position that all stakeholders involved in humanitarian assistance should be guided by the humanitarian principles, and the principles enshrined in resolution RES/46/182. National leadership and ownership, taking into account the national laws and priorities of host states are paramount tenets which should be maintained in humanitarian response.

11. In addition, the Group welcomes the recognition in the Global Compact for Refugees that Development Assistance intended for persons of concern should be ADDITIONAL to existing humanitarian assistance and the development assistance available to realise national priorities. We believe that substitution of humanitarian assistance with development assistance should be avoided, as it will have the undesirable effect of increasing the debt burden on the already over stretched developing host states.
12. In that Regard, the Group would like to extend its appreciation to the World Bank, for the Additional assistance extended to a number of host states in the region, from the IDA-18 sub window for refugee and host communities. The Group is reliably informed that there are Grants besides the soft loans available, under IDA-18 sub window. Therefore, we would appreciate some information on how much has so far been disbursed to host countries as purely grants to support refugees and their host communities. Which countries have benefited, and for what activities have the funds been disbursed?
13. On this note, Chair, the Group reiterates its commitments to the New York Declaration, and commends UNHCR for the transparent and inclusive

manner in which the consultation process for the development of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) was conducted.

14. The Group looks forward to the implementation of the GCR, and believes that its success will rely on the symmetrical implementation of all its objectives. Chairperson, the Global Compact for Refugees provides for a number of arrangements aimed at equitably sharing the burden and responsibility for refugees with host states. The Group looks forward to the translation of these arrangements into actual assistance to fill the recurrent gap in international response, and achieve the purpose of the GCR. This we believe will largely depend on the political will of member states to support the implementation of the Compact.

15. Chair, the African Group is concerned with the increased reports of xenophobia towards persons of concern to the UNHCR. Xenophobic tendencies shrink the space for international protection. In this regard, we would urge the UNHCR to explore ways aimed at assisting States to address this problem. The Group further encourages States to adopt measures that will prevent xenophobia.

16. The Group attaches great importance to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, and is encouraged that 148 states are now parties to one or both of these instruments. The OAU Convention governing specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa lies at the heart of our response in dealing with refugee problems. Therefore, the Group encourages universalisation of refugee related instruments, as they form the bedrock for international protection. We would appreciate an update on the High

Commissioner's activities to promote universalisation of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

17. In addition, the African Group takes note of the importance of the 1961 Convention on Reduction of Statelessness. In this regard, the Group supports the campaign to end statelessness by 2024. We remain keen on following the activities of the High Commissioner in this campaign.
18. Regarding the CRRF, 8 countries in the region are currently part of the role out countries implementing the CRRF. The region has also adopted regional comprehensive response plans to the Somali, Burundi, and DRC situations among others. However, we are yet to receive sufficient support for the comprehensive implementation of these plans.
19. With the adoption of the GCR later this year, and the eventual implementation of the CRRF to other countries in global refugee response, it will be important that the UNHCR pays keen attention to the issue of funding. The generosity of host countries implementing the CRRF under the New York Declaration should be matched by that of the international community, to ensure the success of these new initiatives. Therefore, the Group calls upon the secretariat to enhance its efforts in mobilising adequate resources for the implementation of the CRRF.
20. The Group welcomes UNHCR's engagement with countries of origin, to support conditions for safe, dignified and sustainable return. In particular, we welcome support provided to returnees to facilitate their return, and integration into the society. We believe that voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution to the forcibly

displaced. Therefore, support should be provided to ensure that return to areas of origin is sustainable, to avoid recurrent displacement.

21. Chairperson, the Group expresses its grave concern with the reduction of resettlement places. We are convinced that in addition to voluntary repatriation and local integration, resettlement remains the most durable solution for refugees. In this regard, therefore, we call upon resettlement countries to increase the number of resettlement places and to encourage other countries to initiate resettlement programmes.

22. In conclusion, the Group believes that addressing the root causes of flight will be the most important way to permanently resolve the problem of refugees and other persons of concern. Therefore, we welcome efforts and encourage initiatives towards finding solutions to the root causes of forced displacement.

**THANK YOU.**