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New Version

Statement by Harrison S. Karnwea, Sr., Minister of Internal Affairs of Republic of Liberia and Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) at an Intergovernmental event at the ministerial level of Member States of the United Nations to commemorate the 60TH Anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness from 7-8 December 2011

Your Excellencies

First of all let me congratulate the UNHCR for this celebration of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 convention on the status of refugees and the 50th anniversary of 1961 convention on reduction of statelessness. Liberia would like to identify with the statement delivered on behalf of Africa by Hon. **Archibald Lesao Lehola**, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs and Public Safety and Parliamentary Affairs of Lesotho.

As we converged on Geneva for this all-important international assemblage, there are basically three (3) pledges that the Liberian Government is committed to accomplish in 2012 regarding Refugee Protection, Statelessness and the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (or the Kampala Convention): making our Refugee Law to conform with present days realities; correcting the conflict of laws between our Constitution and the Alien and Nationality Laws of Liberia; and the ratification of the African

Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons known and styled as the Kampala Convention.

I. The Liberia Refugee Act (Refugee Protection)

The Liberia Refugee Act styled and known as the LRA has undergone a series of discussions among key line Ministries and Agencies since the last two years. The objective of these interactive discussions was basically to make some amendments in the Refugee Law so that it conforms to international best practices, regional perspective and today's realities. The proposed amended LRA will be submitted to the 53rd Legislature in 2012 for passage into law.

Some of the key proposed amendment issues are as follows:

- a. Government ownership of the Act
- b. Full operationalization of the Act
- c. Expeditious adjudication of asylum seekers claims through a prompt Refugee Status Determination proceedings (hearing)
- d. Protection of National Security interest
- e. Judicial review shift from the Supreme Court to the Circuit Court
- f. Recognition of June 20 as World Refugee Day to be proclaimed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a working holiday (Highlighting the plight of

refugees around the world with the appropriate Theme from UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva

- g. Harmonization of the Liberia Refugee Act with the Alien and Nationality Law and the Labor Practices Law of Liberia and other domestic legislation.
- h. UNCHR, in addition to its statutory function as a non-voting member of the Commission shall also serve in an advisory capacity.
- i. The Ministry of Labor will be added to the Board of Commissioners
- j. Vice Chairmanship of the Board of Commissioners would now shift from Ministry of Planning to the Ministry of Justice.

2. STATELESSNESS

The issue of conflict of laws between the Constitution and the Alien and Nationality Laws of Liberia with particular emphasis on article 28 of our Constitution and Article 20.1 of the Alien and Nationality Laws of Liberia regarding the nationality of children born outside by either parents of Liberian nationality (transmitting Nationality to children) will be amended to reflect international best practices and as much as possible to reduce Statelessness

3. The Kampala Convention

The Liberian Government participated in all deliberations that formulated the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally

Displaced Persons known and styled as the Kampala Convention. The President of Liberia has forwarded the Convention to the Legislature for ratification. The Liberian Government again pledges that the Convention will be ratified in 2012.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, Liberia remains a haven of refuge for all refugees as she is a signatory to all the conventions we are celebrating today.

We are working with the UNHCR on the invocation of the cessation clause for Liberian refugees still in host country while catering to our brothers and sisters from the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire and integrating Sierra Leonean Refugees in Liberia. With these pledges come our commitment to ensuring that Liberia plays a role within the family of nations in protecting the rights of Internally Displaced People and Refugees.

I thank you.