

Statement

By

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At

Ministerial Conference of Member States of the United Nations on the occasion of
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

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Mr. Chairperson,

It gives me great pleasure to speak at this landmark event marking the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction on Statelessness.

The Government of Ethiopia highly commends the Commissioner for Refugees for his leadership on global refugee issues and for facilitating the successful convening of this ministerial conference.

We endorse the Statement made by Lesotho on behalf of the African Group.

The protection of refugees, returnees and stateless persons has been supplemented with the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. I pay special tribute to UNHCR for its support to the African Union in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

Ethiopia has maintained an open door asylum policy which has been codified by the adoption of the national Refugee Proclamation of June 2004. The law provides for the definition of a refugee consistent with the UN and African ^{union} Conventions. It establishes procedures for asylum application and for granting a refugee status. It protects refugees *refoulement*, and lays down rights and obligations of refugees consistent with the relevant international instruments.

The refugee program in Ethiopia is one of Africa's longest running and largest operations. Ethiopia currently hosts close to 300,000 refugees mainly from

the neighbouring countries who are receiving the necessary protection and assistance.

Ethiopia's open door policy to refugees reflects the long standing tradition of the country and the close ties it enjoys with neighbouring countries and peoples. Ethiopia thus aims to promote deeper and closer ties between communities in the region through people-to-people relationships. One good example is the decision of the Government to issue an 'out-of-camp scheme' allowing Eritrean refugees, who chose to do so, to live in any part of the country and providing over 1,000 Eritrean refugee students scholarship opportunities to pursue their higher education in various institutions of higher learning in the country.

The Government of Ethiopia has continued to seek lasting solutions to the various regional refugee related problems. In this regard, we call on the international community to support the efforts of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, IGAD and African Union to sustainably address the conflict situation in Somalia with resolute and united action.

Mr. Chairperson,

While Ethiopia remains committed to its open door policy, the international community is called upon to provide adequate support on ensure that refugees continue enjoying basic services and educational opportunities on a sustainable basis and for the rehabilitation and development of areas affected by large-scale refugee population.

I would like to end this Statement with the following pledges;

- Ethiopia is committed to maintain its open door asylum policy to refugees seeking protection assistance in its territory.
- Ethiopia is committed to continue its close cooperation with UNHCR and with the international community in finding durable solutions to the emerging refugee and displacement problems.
- Ethiopia pledges to continue the faithful implementation of the 1951 Convention and contributing to global efforts to this end.
- Ethiopia will continue scrupulously enforcing the national Refugee Proclamation as the necessary domestic framework.

I thank You.