

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE HON, PAURINA MPARIWA (M.P.) ON THE OCCASION OF THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1951 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES AND THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE 1961 CONVENTION OF THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS.**

08-12-11  
AM

**Mr Chairperson,**

**Your Excellency, the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees**

**Hon Ministers here present**

**Distinguished guests**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

Let me start my address by pointing out that my delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson, our presence in Geneva over these few days provides us with a rare opportunity to reflect on our collective efforts in providing protection to refugees particularly in these times of limited resources due to the global financial crisis and escalating instability in many regions.

We are engaged in the reflections as we commemorate the 60 years of being in use of the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees as well as the 50 years of the existence of the 1961 Convention on the reduction of statelessness.

In playing its part, of providing protection to refugees, Zimbabwe is guided by the principles underpinning the two international instruments in question.

Zimbabwe acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and has since domesticated it. In this respect let me state that the Zimbabwe Refugee Act of 1983 which domesticated the said instruments and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa becoming a model piece of legislation in the region. Currently, the relevant authorities are discussing the accession to the 1961 Convention.

Chairperson, it is on the basis of the usefulness of these instruments that Zimbabwe has provided host to over 200 000 refugees from neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Namibia during the apartheid era, Mozambique during the 1980s. As I, speak, Zimbabwe is playing host to over 5000 refugees from the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

Zimbabwe remains committed to play its part in providing international protection to refugees and other persons of concern. In this regard, Zimbabwe pledges to establish a Reception Centre at its north eastern border with Mozambique to receive asylum seekers from the Horn of Africa and to a lesser extent from the Great Lakes Region. Secondly, we also pledge to strengthen the capacities of state and non –actors who interface with asylum seekers during the refugee status determination phase.

In conclusion, Chairperson, Zimbabwe looks forward to the sharing of ideas and practical solutions to current challenges relating to refugees and other people of concern at this occasion.

I thank you