



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Statement by Ms. Florence Habasune
Mweemba, Deputy Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Home Affairs on the occasion
of the 60th Anniversary of the 1951 UN
Convention relating to the Status of
Refugees and the 50th Anniversary of the
1961 Convention on the Reduction of
Statelessness.

Geneva, 7-8 December 2011. AM

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I wish to join others in commending the High Commissioner for having organized this important event and to congratulate him for his highly informative statement on this important occasion marking 60 years of the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and the 50 years of the Convention on the reduction of Statelessness.

Zambia was privileged earlier this year to have been one of the seven countries that hosted dialogues on refugee women in the context of these commemorations, which amongst other issues tackled SGBV. Already, follow up activities have resulted in increased awareness on the rights of refugee women and children in the refugee settlements, as well as among law enforcement officers and teachers. We thank Assistant High Commissioner Erika Feller for joining us at that occasion.

Zambia aligns herself to the statement by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Lesotho on behalf of the Africa Group.

Mr. Chairman

The protection of refugees and others of concern could not have been more challenging today given the emergence and prevalence of the complex phenomenon of mixed migration and irregular movements and the need to preserve the integrity of the institution of asylum. The need for continued solidarity, cooperation and coordination in addressing the global refugee problem remains essential and cannot therefore be overemphasized.

Mr. Chairman,

On this important occasion, the Government of the Republic of Zambia pledges to repeal and replace the domestic refugee legislation, the 1970 Refugees (Control) Act in order to bring it more in conformity with the 1951 UN Convention on the status of refugees.

Over the years, Zambia's practice in the protection of and assistance to refugees has been way beyond provisions in the domestic legislation in many aspects, including Refugee Status

Determination Procedures. In order to consolidate the legal framework for the protection of refugees in the country, Zambia will amend the refugee domestic legislation to include most of the practices already in place and which are in conformity with provisions of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the status of refugees. This state action will ensure that the Convention is properly implemented in Zambia.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of the Republic of Zambia pledges to facilitate the securing of a durable solution through Local Integration for about 10,000 Angolan refugees who have been living in Zambia for over four decades, some of whom have been born and brought up in Zambia as second or third generation refugees.

The status to be accorded will be citizenship for those who are off-springs of intermarriages between local Zambians and Angolan refugees. The vast majority will be granted permanent residency permits under the Country's Immigration Law, a status which will enable the holders of such permits to eventually qualify for citizenship of Zambia.

I must hasten to add here that for this pledge to be implemented in a manner that will not cause an imbalance in the socio-economic foundation of the local host communities, the Government of the Republic of Zambia will require from UNHCR and the international Community, support for socio-economic projects to benefit both the local host Zambian communities and the locally integrated former refugees.

Mr. Chairman,

In the area of statelessness, my country does have sufficient nationality legislation including within the country's Constitution through which persons seeking the nationality of Zambia can acquire it. In addition, the country does have legislation dealing with birth registration for all births on the Zambian territory.

However, in order to strengthen the country's legal framework on nationality issues, the Government of the Republic of Zambia pledges to take all necessary measures to become party to the 1961 Convention on the reduction of statelessness.

To implement this pledge, the Republic of Zambia will require support from the UNHCR to conduct an independent Study on the issue of statelessness in the Country. Results of the study will help in the state action to become party to the 1961 Convention on the reduction of statelessness but even more importantly, the results will help the state to develop a strategy to deal with statelessness in the country either for populations already affected or at risk of becoming stateless.

Mr. Chairman

In concluding, I wish to reaffirm Zambia's continued commitment to its international obligations under the refugee conventions to which the state is party and will in this regard continue to cooperate with UNHCR in their mandate to provide international protection and seek durable solutions to refugees and persons of concern.

I thank you.