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**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY**

**Hon. Dr. Moses Manwau, MP  
Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration of Papua New Guinea**

**At the Ministerial Level Meeting of the Member States of the United Nations 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 on the Reduction of  
Statelessness**

**7-8 December 2011** PH

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H. E. Mr. Antonio Guterres ,UN High Commissioner for Refugees,  
Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government and People of Papua New Guinea, I offer our warm greetings to you all and wish to thank His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres for his astute leadership in organizing this important meeting.

It is indeed an honor to speak to you at this important event and I pledge my Government's support to you and seek to develop partnerships that will promote our common course to address the plight of refugees and stateless people, the world over.

I am humbled by the dazzling achievements of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees whose written history transcends my country, Papua New Guinea. I stand today in the company of what I consider as global citizens who recognize the importance of protecting the fundamental human rights and dignity of refugees and stateless people.

I would like to join you all in reaffirming the noble value and purpose of the 1951 Refugee Convention. While the Convention came into force almost sixty (60) years ago it is still very valuable and relevant in today's context.

Papua New Guinea signed the 1951 Refugee Convention on 15 October 1986 at a time when there was a mass exodus of more than 15,000 West Papuan

Refugees from the Papua Province of the Republic of Indonesia. This was the first experience of its kind in Papua New Guinea since independence and when Papua New Guinea signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, it did so with seven reservations.

Nevertheless, despite these reservations, my government has generously hosted and supported the West Papuan Refugees for more than two decades. Our Government provided land for refugees to settle in Iowara-East Awin area of Western Province of my country, access to health and education services, as well as support for income projects to allow the refugees to become self-reliant.

However, there is still the need to improve the overall protection framework in Papua New Guinea and I am pleased to inform this meeting that my Government has instigated review process with the aim of lifting the seven reservations that were made when we signed the 1951 Refugee Convention.

In addition, the Government is also in the process of reviewing the Migration and Citizenship Act to ensure that rights and obligations arising from the 1951 Refugee Convention is incorporated into national legislations. Our Government also has a determined interest in establishing proper refugee status determination procedures and structures to effectively determine who is a genuine refugee and in need of protection. In this regard the current Government is grateful for the support provided by your Office in Papua New Guinea.

Furthermore, West Papuan refugees have expressed their interest to become citizens of Papua New Guinea but have been constraint by a mandatory fee of K10,000 citizenship application fee, which is approximately US\$ 4,000. I am pleased to announce that my Government is ready to look into weavering or a nominal fee so that West Papuan refugees or any other genuine refugees can apply for citizenship. We are determined to give refugees the kind of life, liberty, peace and prosperity they deserve so that they can hold their own against any other citizens in Papua New Guinea.

As the 60<sup>th</sup> year of the Refugee Convention is celebrated, we note the challenges surrounding refugee protection and identifying those who are in need for protection. May I, in this regard, also note the need to look into the plight of those displaced by climate change around the world which is also an issue of concern in Papua New Guinea. We are seriously concerned about the effects of climate change and in Carteret Island of the Autonomous Bougainville, we have the first internally displaced people as a result of climate change

In closing, I wish to thank you and your Office for the support my Government has received in the past which I hope will be continued into the future for the wellbeing of the refugees in Papua New Guinea. This would allow my Government to fully implement the provisions of the 1951 Refugee Convention to realize its noble intentions.

I thank you all