

AFRICAN GROUP STATEMENT

at the

**Intergovernmental Event at the Ministerial Level 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**

07-12-11 AM

Mr. Chairman,
Your Excellencies Ministers present here today,
Your Excellency the High Commissioner for Refugees,
Distinguished representatives of all Members States of the
United Nations,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the African Group. Permit me also to, in the interest of time and for efficiency gains, deliver the Lesotho statement subsequent to the Group statement.

Mr. Chairman, the African Group wishes to assure you that we have every confidence that under your able guidance and leadership, this event will be a commemorative one and that it will, indeed, achieve its desired outcomes.

First and foremost, by this statement, the African Group expresses the unwavering support of all Member States on the African continent in commemoration of the two Conventions that has brought the entire United Nations family together today and tomorrow. Indeed this sentiment will go down the memory lane as it is placed on record in the resolution on the Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa adopted by the United Nations General Assembly just a few weeks ago.

Mr. Chairman,
Our gathering in Geneva over these two days provides us with, amongst others, a rare opportunity to pause and reflect on the strength or probable gaps and weaknesses of the two Conventions before us in these modern times. True to their spirit, both Conventions have served the world over decades and, throughout their history, the African continent has also benefited from the protection legal framework they continue to provide.

It is with the foregoing in mind that the African Group notes with conviction that the principles embodied in the Conventions should

be upheld and promoted at all fronts. To this end, it would be encouraging to see in-depth reflections on the Conventions by those Member States of the United Nations family who have, at the present moment, neither signed nor acceded to the Conventions. In this regard, it will be remiss of the African Group not to congratulate those States that have made a decision to capitalize on this occasion by acceding to the Conventions.

In the same vein, congratulations are extended to those States that have pledged to take concrete steps towards the accession process and other similar processes whose ultimate purpose is to improve the implementation of these international laws. We need to be reminded that this is in the interest of beneficiaries who, because of their circumstances, cannot be with us as we discuss this very important matter.

Mr. Chairman,

The authority of the Conventions in the face of ever-increasing humanitarian challenges of today is another area that the African Group believes this august body ought to reminisce about. Questions that we ought to ask ourselves includes whether the ongoing and new emergencies are adequately covered by the Conventions. In like manner, we should also reflect on whether the Conventions address the large-scale displacements that are the legacy of the past. Indeed the African Group regards this event as an interactive session with the potential to formulate concrete and innovative ideas that will pave way for the practical implementation of the Conventions.

The African Group also regards this event as an opportunity for Member States of the United Nations family to strengthen cooperation among themselves. Amongst others, this can be achieved by the provision of requisite support to national authorities aimed at developing the capacity of States.

In conclusion **Mr. Chairman**, the African Group looks forward to an invigorating event with practical outcomes that will challenge us to reflect upon when we get back to our respective Capitals.

I thank you.