



ZIMBABWE

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF
PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE**

HONOURABLE PROF. P. MAVIMA (MP)

**TO THE 71ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE(EXCOM)
OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER'S
PROGRAMME**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND:

5th to 9th of OCTOBER 2020

**Mr. President,
The High Commissioner
Your Excellences
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Allow me, Mr. President to commence my intervention by thanking you and the members of your bureau for providing guidance to the organization during these unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic. I also want to thank the High Commissioner, Mr. Filippo Grandi and his staff for their commitment to duty under difficult conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. President, Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Algeria on behalf of the Africa Group. Furthermore, Zimbabwe welcomes the High Commissioner's report in which he raises a number pertinent operational and administrative issues. However, because of time constraints, I will proceed to respond to a few of them.

Mr. President, it is common cause that the strengthened international protection regime of forcibly displaced persons under the Global Compact on Refugees that we seek is largely dependent on the provision of adequate resources.

Sadly, the overall funding gap is huge and growing over the years. This scenario impacts negatively on the quality of protection of the populations of concern to the organization. The refugees in Africa are among the worst affected.

The resource issue, is likely to remain a challenge more so due to the impact of COVID -19 on the economies across the globe. However, Zimbabwe takes note of the High Commissioner's efforts of reaching out to non-traditional donors including the Bretton Wood institutions and other multilateral financing arrangements.

Zimbabwe is of the view that such support from international financial institutions, for example from the World Bank, should be extended to all refugee hosting countries and benefit all refugees including their host communities. The idea of a qualifying threshold tends to disadvantage countries that host small refugee populations. This ultimately affects the refugees themselves.

Nevertheless, Zimbabwe supports the active involvement of the multilateral financial institutions, private sector and other humanitarian actors in addressing international refugee protection challenges.

Mr. President, Zimbabwe applauds the peacebuilding initiatives that the High Commissioner referred to in his report. Collectively, we need to invest in conflict resolution mechanisms to mitigate the rising number of people of concern to UNHCR that currently stands at 93 million.

Additionally, we need to better prepare to deal with consequences of climate induced natural disasters. With a reduced number of forcibly displaced people the available resources may go a long way in sustaining an enhanced international protection regime which premised on burden and responsibility sharing.

Mr. President, Zimbabwe remains committed t to the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Its commitment is further demonstrated by the inclusion of refugees and other people of concern in the national COVID-19 health, socio -economic response and recovery plan.

To begin with, the government has put measures for early screening against Covid19 of new arrivals at the border entry points. Referral procedures are in place for easy transfer of those who test positive, their isolation and or quarantine before subsequent integration into the refugee community.

Furthermore, the government established a quarantine center and an isolation center at the Tongogara Refugee Camp that has so far hosted 38 individuals, including one who had tested positive.

Mr. President, Zimbabwe remains committed towards the implementation of the pledges it submitted to the 2019 High Level Segment on Statelessness and the first Global Refugee Forum. A number of activities are already being undertaken to realize the pledges.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic it might not be possible to undertake all activities and legislative reforms to give effect to a number of pledges whose completion period is end of 2021. The government will be liaising with UNHCR country office and other partners with a view to extending the deadlines.

In conclusion President, be rest assured that Zimbabwe will continue to shoulder its responsibilities over refugees and asylum seekers taking into account the national laws and realities on the ground.

I Thank You.