

SPEECH BY HON. TSUKUTLANE AU

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ON THE OCCASION OF

69TH SESSION OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

GENEVA, 1--5 OCTOBER 2018

Chairperson,

High Commissioner

Honourable ministers

Excellencies Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my singular honour and privilege to address this august gathering on the occasion of the 69th Session of the High Commissioner's Programme here in Geneva, on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho wishes to align itself with the statement made on behalf of the Africa Group.

It is reported that more than 68 million people around the world are refugees or internally displaced persons as a result of conflict and / persecution. This is due among others to the protracted refugee situation in Afghanistan, the war in Southern Sudan and Somalia. From the statement of the High Commissioner, it is clear that the number of refugees is increasing at an alarming rate and there is a need for all of us to muster our collective resolve in order to address this challenge.

Current flows of refugees worldwide continue to place United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under extreme pressure, especially in the

light of inadequate resources. This being the the case as the High Commissioner said the state of the World does not look good and the signs of decreasing support to the refugees are alarming.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Lesotho is experiencing new dynamic of influx of big families of refugees from the Great Lakes Region, travelling together. This include minors and pregnant women. This is particularly scary looking at the conditions under which these vulnerable group had to endure during these hazardous journeys.

This category of persons needs international protection strategies that address needs and aspirations that are specific that are in line with refugee comprehensive response framework.

This also points to the issue of porous borders which is epitomised by increasing secondary movement of refugees. This issue has also opened huge business to smugglers and traffickers who not only extort moneys from their victims but also

abuse them in various ways. The Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho has always and will always continue to open doors to refugees despite our small economy and escalating unemployment.

May i point out that in a small but growing population of refugees resident in this country, a number of them are working in the remote regions of our country as doctors, nurses, teachers, and business people. Refugees in Lesotho have always and continue to fill the void in various sectors left by our professionals who left our country in search of greener pastures. This is a testament that migration is indeed development: whether forced or voluntary.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UN Women in their statement for World Refugee day 2018 said” We need to break away from traditional response strategies that are no longer adequate to support the reality facing refugees today. The average length of displacement is now 17 years or more, which means that those affected will spend a significant portion of their lives

as refugees. This must shift our understanding of requirements and solutions from those of people on the move, to those of non-movement.

This therefore calls for Multi- sectoral approach, in which, Governments, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies should work together to find ways of protecting people in need of protection. The Kingdom have forged partnership with Skills share and other NGO's and this is already bearing fruits. Refugee children are able to attend school with proper uniform. The Kingdom continue to naturalize those refugees who are willing to take Lesotho citizenship and fully integrate into our society as one of the durable solution to the plight of refugees. We have also included refugees and stateless persons in our new Immigration and Citizen Bill 2018. We have also integrated migration into National Strategic Developmnt Plan as we are fully aware that Refugee status is not a permanent status.

In conclusion Chair, I wish to assure this august house that Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho is fully committed to the cause of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We therefore urge the International Community to fully

implement the Global Compact on Refugees, including through pledges and contributions towards its objectives.

I THANK YOU ALL.

KHOTSO!! PULA!! NALA!!!!