



UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

STATEMENT

BY

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UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA**

**DURING THE 69TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
01ST – 05TH OCTOBER, 2018 GENEVA**

Chairperson,

At the outset, allow me to thank and commend the High Commissioner for Refugees Mr. Filippo Grandi and the UNHCR's staff for the sterling job they continue to do of providing international protection to persons of concern often under difficult and dangerous circumstances. Let me also pay tribute to the High Commissioner for his comprehensive and illuminating opening statement in this regard. By the same token, I wish to thank the World Bank Chief Executive Officer Ms. Kristalina Ivanova Georgieva for her statement to this august body.

Before I go any further let me say that my delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Uganda on behalf of the African Group.

Chairperson,

As we meet here today, Tanzania continues to keep her borders open welcoming and giving asylum to persons fleeing persecution, civil unrest, ethnic tensions and political instabilities in their countries of origin.

Currently, Tanzania is home to some **337,756** refugees and asylum seekers out of which **255,473** are Burundians; **81,682** are Congolese; and **601** are from other nationalities.

As you may be aware, as of today, two Tripartite Commission Meetings have been conducted, the latest being on 28 March, 2018 a meeting which took place in Bujumbura, Burundi. The outcome of these meetings has been the successful implementation of the on-going Voluntary Repatriation Exercise which has seen the return of more than **50,000** Burundian refugees in conditions of safety and dignity. Since the establishment of the voluntary return process in September, 2017, **80,000** refugees have registered on their own free will to return home.

It is important to note that, the implementation of the Tripartite Agreement especially the aspect of Voluntary Return is conducted in constant and close collaboration between the Government of Tanzania and the Office of UNHCR Representation in Tanzania and all other relevant implementing partners. Before departure of any refugee registered for Voluntary Repatriation, his/ her consent for returning home is vouched and validated by the Office of the UNHCR through the signed Voluntary Repatriation Form.

I believe, during the recent visit to Tanzania by the Assistant High Commissioner Mr. Volker Turk, he was able to validate the authenticity of the Voluntary Repatriation Process. But even before this visit by the Assistant High Commissioner, the European Union Commission through their Ambassadors in Tanzania had also an opportunity to make an official visit to one of the refugee camps in June, 2018 and were equally satisfied with the way the return process was being conducted.

It is against this background that my delegation wishes to refute in the strongest possible terms allegations that the Government

of the United Republic of Tanzania is returning ^{forcefully} Burundian refugees. These allegations are baseless and unfounded. They are aimed at tarnishing the good name and image of our country. My delegation wishes to assure this August body that, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is and remains committed to the principle of voluntary repatriation and will continue to pursue her international obligations as a host state in line with international conventions and norms.

Chairperson,

My delegation wishes to express its concern with respect the problem of funding which apart from affecting all sectors of the refugee programme in Tanzania, is also crippling the voluntary repatriation exercise. The voluntary Repatriation Programme is being severely affected by the acute shortage of funds placing both UNHCR and IOM in very difficult conditions in the implementation. Recently, IOM was at the verge of halting the return process because of lack of funds. While the refugees are being registered in big numbers, some are forced to wait for as long as six months before they can be repatriated because of shortage of funds which in turn has impacted severely the logistics capacity of IOM.

As a host State, we believe every refugee has the fundamental right to return home in conditions of safety and dignity especially now when conditions in Burundi have stabilized tremendously warranting such returns. Thus, my delegation calls upon the International Community in the spirit of responsibility and burden sharing to fully support the return process by providing funds to both UNHCR and IOM.

We call upon the development partners to invest in return areas in Burundi. Burundi should be assisted in developing the necessary infrastructures to allow for maximum returns per convoy and to create the necessary social-economic conditions for sustainable returns and re-integration.

Chairperson,

Let me also touch on another area of big concern to Tanzania. This is the issue of alternative source of Energy.

As a country facing negative environmental impacts due to hosting huge numbers of refugees for many years now, we would like to call the attention of this August body to the urgent need of addressing the problems of deforestation. In the spirit of burden sharing we urge development partners to extend their support in the search for alternative sources of energy in Tanzania. We call upon UNHCR to come up with pragmatic plan of establishing large scale Briquettes Production Centre to supply alternative source of cooking energy to both refugees and hosting community.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, allow me to express our appreciation to the international community particularly, UNHCR, IOM, WFP and all other UN Sisters Agencies for their continued co-operation in supporting the Tanzania Refugee Programme. My delegation assures these important stakeholders of our continued support and co-operation in our joint quest for refugee solutions.

I thank you for you kind attention