



124

Republic of Sierra Leone

Statement Delivered

By

The Commissioner

National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)

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Mr. Chairman, High Commissioner, and Distinguished Delegates: I am profoundly honoured to speak on behalf on my delegation and the Government of Sierra Leone at this 69th Session of Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programme.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to commend the High Commissioner for the good collaboration and continued support that have existed between UNHCR and the Government of Sierra Leone, especially with the leadership of the newly elected Government. The Government of Sierra Leone is aware that the leadership of UNHCR is experiencing robust engagement in handling dangerous, complex and unprecedented global humanitarian emergencies and displacements in other countries and wishes to commend your interventions to address humanitarian issues

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, it is important that we firmly and sincerely live up to the commitments made by the Government of Sierra Leone to take ownership of the Refugee Programme in the advent of UNHCR phase-out in Sierra Leone at the end of 2019

Mr. Chairman, High Commissioner, my delegation wishes to reiterate our commitment to the protection of refugees and other Persons of Concern. In this regard, I wish on behalf of my delegation to highlight our achievements:

The Government made remarkable achievements in the eradication of statelessness and paramount among them are: (i) the amendment of the Citizenship Act which provides women equal rights as men in the conferment of nationality to their spouses; (ii) recommendation made by the Constitutional Review Committee to grant citizenship to foundlings below 5 years of age; Development of the National Action Plan to eradicate Statelessness; and the (iii) establishment of a National Steering Committee on Statelessness. This is expected to be adopted in December 2018.

Mr. Chairman, High Commissioner, in order to ensure the full implementation of the Local Integration Programme of Refugees in ensuring that they live a productive life. NaCSA has identified 378 locally integrated refugees to be mainstreamed and enrolled into its livelihood activities towards the end of

2018. This support will motivate the exempted refugee caseload that is unwilling to opt for local integration or voluntary repatriation to reconsider the two options

Mr. Chairman, I wish to also inform you that the process of providing legal documentation for Persons of Concern with support from UNHCR, 139 passports out of a total of 191 red coded cases that were reviewed and approved in December 2016 by the Liberian authorities have been secured by NaCSA in order to help compliment the local integration programme.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, the Government of Sierra Leone is working assiduously to conclude the amendment of the 2007 Refugee Act which is hoped to be completed by November 2018 in order to ensure a fair and effective asylum system that will be consistent with international best practices.

Mr. High Commissioner, the Government of Sierra Leone in its new direction has taken a laudable venture to commit itself to include refugees into National Programme activities such as the Free Education from Primary to Senior Secondary School, prioritizing to provide grant-in-aid to qualified persons of concern admitted to tertiary institutions and free healthcare for pregnant women, lactating mothers and under fives.

My delegation is indeed mindful of the challenging emergencies, protracted situations and massive displacement in other parts of the world of unprecedented circumstance your agency is trying to contend with. However, my delegation wishes to seek your continued technical and other supports in enabling us meet our commitments especially in the eradication of statelessness by 2024, and in light of UNHCR's folding up funding in Sierra Leone by December 2019.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, High Commissioner, Distinguished Delegates, I wish to re-echo our unflinching commitment in the provision of international protection of refugees and other persons of concern.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to make this statement.