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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Fifteenth Ordinary Session
24 – 30 June, 2009
Sirte, Libya

EX.CL/502 (XV)

**REPORT OF THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES
AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA**

**REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY
DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA TO THE FIFTEENTH ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL: FEBRUARY- JUNE 2009**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Report to the 15th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council covers the period from February to June 2009, during which the situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa continued to be of grave concern.
2. The Report contains a region by region analysis of the situation of forced displacement on the African Continent, an update on the status of implementation of the previous decisions by the Executive Council and activities of the Commission in the area of humanitarian affairs and forced displacement, as well as the challenges and way forward.
3. The information gathered for this report was provided by some African Union (AU) Member States, missions of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, AU Partners, namely, Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), and the UN/AU Strategic Planning Management Unit in Addis Ababa.
4. It shall be recalled that the previous Executive Decision EX.CL/Dec.462 (XIV) of January 2009 requested “*Member States to provide the Commission with up-to-date statistics on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in order to enable the Commission to reflect the true picture of the humanitarian situation in their countries*”, however, at the time of reporting only Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Liberia, Rwanda, Mozambique and Zimbabwe had responded to the Commission’s request for such data.
5. A compiled table of the statistics received from the various sources has therefore been attached as *Annex 1*.

**II. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES
AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA**

6. With ongoing conflicts in every region of the Continent and protracted cases of forced displacement, thousands of African people continue to find themselves fleeing their homes and seeking asylum either in displacement camps within their countries, neighboring countries or elsewhere outside of Africa. The Commission therefore has continued to advocate with Member States to reaffirm their commitments to combating

the root causes of forced displacement and extend their hospitality to the victims of forced displacement crossing over into their countries to seek asylum.

7. The African Union is particularly concerned about the situations in the Central and Eastern Africa regions which continue to be the most troubled regions on the Continent and therefore witnessing mass movements of refugees and IDPs. In 2009, as part of its operations in Africa, WFP expects to provide food assistance to about 1.5 million refugees, 10 million IDPs, and 2 million returnees. Other aid organizations also continue to assist millions of refugees and IDPs in the area of livelihood support projects. From January to March 2009 alone, the ICRC provided such assistance to about 1,239,483 IDPs in 13 African countries in the areas of Essential Household Item (EHI), water and sanitation, livelihood and agricultural support, and food rations and therapeutic feeding. During the reporting period also, IOM assisted in the resettlement of about 14,703 and the voluntary repatriation of 1,516 victims of forced displacement across the Continent.

8. Additionally, there are also the victims of natural and man-made disasters across Africa who are continuously in need of assistance in rebuilding their lives and their damaged infrastructures which in some areas are their links to sustainable livelihoods.

9. The resilient solidarity shown by Member States in hosting refugees from other countries and in offering financial assistance to those in need is recognized, especially since many African countries are themselves burdened by the responsibility of caring for their own nationals.

10. In accordance with the many decisions of the Executive Council, humanitarian aid agencies have continued to synergize their programmes and to work in close collaboration with governments, particularly in situations of complex emergencies. The operational challenges for humanitarian agencies working in Africa, however, are immense due to intractable conflicts in some countries, causing endless flows of refugees and IDPs, and the increasingly insecure circumstances in which humanitarian aid workers execute their mandates. Violence against aid workers has been on a steady increase in recent years.

11. This report therefore seeks to draw insight from the prevailing humanitarian situation in AU Member States and highlight some of the many challenges facing Member States and humanitarian workers alike in finding durable solutions to the problem of forced displacement in Africa.

III. REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

A. Northern Region

12. In the Northern Africa Region, the situation has not seen much change since the last report to Council in January 2009. The Commission would however, like to draw attention to the protracted situation of the 165,000 Sahrawi refugees, 60% of who are

women, children and elders living in camps in Tindouf, **Algeria**. They continue to rely on the Government of Algeria and the international community for humanitarian assistance, while awaiting a durable political solution to their situation. **Egypt** also continues to host about 42,844 refugees and asylum seekers.

B. Western Region

13. The situation in the Western Region had seen some significant returns in refugees and IDPs, due largely to the resolution of the conflicts that ravaged the region in the latter part of the 20th and early 21st Centuries. The region had seen relative stability in recent years; however with political instability in Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and Guinea (Conakry), there is some cause for concern on the general state of security of the region and the impact this could have on some vulnerable countries.

14. In **Benin**, the number of refugees and asylum seekers reported by government officials is 7,133, most of who are Togolese numbering about 2,971. The majority of the refugees and asylum seekers (3,779) in Benin are settled in urban centres, while the remainders are in two refugee camps. Following the Tripartite Agreement between the governments of Togo and Benin, and UNHCR in April 2007, about 3,271 Togolese refugees have repatriated to their places of origin.

15. In February 2009, the Government of **Burkina Faso** informed the Commission of the new Loi n°042-2008/AN on the Status of Refugees in Burkina Faso, which marked an important step towards reinforcing the legal protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Burkina Faso is host to 557 refugees and 604 asylum seekers, mostly from its neighboring countries, and since the early 1990s has offered resettlement for refugees from other African countries.

16. According to information provided by the Government of **Côte d'Ivoire**, the most up-to-date statistical data on the number of IDPs in the country is based on a survey conducted in 2005, which identified 709,377 IDPs living in five districts around the country. The total IDP population country-wide is therefore still estimated between 500,000 and 1,500,000. The World Food Programme reported that the prolonged crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has created a complex humanitarian emergency which has disrupted the country's food security, and impacted neighboring countries. Despite the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement in March 2007 and efforts made by the Ivorian Government thereafter to elaborate assistance programmes for voluntary repatriation and resettlement exercises, there still remains a lack of confidence among the IDPs and refugees in neighboring countries who have yet to return. According to the African Union Liaison Office in Côte d'Ivoire, about 120,000 people have returned to their areas of origin in the western part of the country, since the signing of the Peace Agreement. Poor infrastructure, lack of access to basic social services and occasional insecurity caused by some young ex-combatants in the area, are the major challenges facing returnees. Côte d'Ivoire, in spite of its own problems, continues to be host to about 24,881 refugees from neighboring countries.

17. The death of the President of the **Republic of Guinea** and the subsequent political instability in December 2008 was cause for serious concern for its neighboring countries, especially Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone who are recovering from years of devastating civil wars that transcended each other's boundaries. Since voluntary repatriation exercises for Sierra Leonean refugees ended in July 2004, about 6,379 of the estimated 43,000 Sierra Leoneans who continue to live as refugees are registered in Guinea. About 21,488 refugees from neighboring countries are registered in Guinea.

18. According to Government authorities in **Liberia**, there are currently no IDPs remaining in the country, as the 500,000 that were internally displaced during the civil war have been successfully reintegrated in their areas of origin or in some cases chosen to remain in their new areas of settlement, with the assistance of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), UNHCR and other humanitarian partners. Returnees however continue to face significant challenges such as lack of viable economic activities and inadequate housing facilities in areas of return. The country is also presently hosting about 10,216 refugees from Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, with a small number of asylum seekers from countries of the sub-region and other parts of Africa. Liberia is currently integrating residual Sierra Leonean refugees into local communities with the objective that they become members of the Liberian society. By the end of 2009, it is expected that they will gain self-sufficiency and contribute to the development of the country.

C. Central Region

19. Since the last report, the Central Region continued to experience movements within and outside the region as repatriation exercises are being conducted in some areas, while in others people are seeking refuge elsewhere.

20. Since the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord in 2002, the consolidation of peace in **Burundi** has made significant progress and as a result, thousands of Burundian refugees returned home mainly from Tanzania, under the auspices of the UNHCR voluntary repatriation programme. Between 2002 and March 2009, UNHCR had repatriated over 474,071 Burundian refugees out of which 459,523 came from Tanzania, while the rest were from other neighboring countries. Returnees receive essential food and non-food items upon arrival as well as some money to help them integrate into society. Additionally, the most vulnerable groups are helped to build their shelters. Since 16 percent of the country's population is considered vulnerable and in need of permanent humanitarian aid, in February 2009 a humanitarian support programme was created to provide assistance to them. Furthermore, in order to ensure sustainability of returnees and socio-economic reintegration, UNHCR in collaboration with the Government contributed to the improvement of conditions in the area of community projects.

21. Concerning, IDPs the number was estimated at 100,000 living in 160 sites in 2006 according to OCHA. However, in 2007 a UNHCR assessment team found out that

the number of IDPs in the southern provinces of Bururi, Makamba and Rutana had decreased by 35 percent which is about 10,200 IDPs within the past two years and many more were willing to return home, while the IDPs in the north were still skeptical as they continue to cultivate their lands during the day and return to IDP settlements at night. While receiving its nationals back and taking care of the IDPs, the country is also host to 27,787 refugees of whom 27,386 come from the DRC.

22. Regarding **Cameroon**, during the January session in 2009, it was reported that the country was host to about 78,000 refugees. However the number of refugees has increased to 81,037. This increase is due to the renewed fighting in some of the neighboring countries.

The refugees in the country originate from Central African Republic, DRC, Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

23. In **Central African Republic (CAR)**, renewed fighting between the rebels and the Government of CAR in mid-January 2009 has sent more than 8,000 people fleeing their homes for refuge in the town of Daha, in Southern Chad. Over the years, some 56,000 CAR refugees have flocked to five camps in Southern Chad, while an estimated 26,000 are reported to be in Cameroon. The majority of the refugees are women, children and elderly persons. CAR also records about 108,000 IDPs in camps in the northern and northwestern parts of the country. Additionally, it continues to host about 7,200 refugees from Sudan and other nationalities.

24. Due to the civil war that has been raging in the Darfur region of western Sudan since early 2003, **Chad** is host to about 250,000 refugees from Darfur out of the total number of about 302,687 refugees in the country, according to recent figures from UNHCR. The number of refugees from Darfur that are in Chad, have been on a steady increase since 2003, and to date there are twelve refugee camps in the eastern part of the country, hosting Darfuri refugees alongside about 166,000 Chadian IDPs. The volatile situation in its other neighboring country, Central African Republic (CAR) is also sending thousands of refugees across the border into southern Chad. The prevailing humanitarian situation in the country is further aggravated by the refugee influxes and Chad has very limited capacity to cope with the refugees within its territory. The Government relies heavily on external assistance for its own food security, especially in the Sahelian Zone which is affected by chronic food deficits, as reported by WFP.

25. The humanitarian organizations operating in the field report that the main problem of refugees was acute scarcity of water as a majority of them had access to less than half of the minimum standard of 15 liters per person per day. Other difficulties included inadequate education, supplies of food and firewood. During the reporting period also, some 4,415 Chadian refugees returned home. The ICRC provides emergency aid, as well as livelihood preservation and support services to the refugees from Darfur, and the Chadian IDP and returnee populations.

26. In January 2009, Council noted the deteriorating security and grave humanitarian situation in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, in particular in the eastern part of the country in North Kivu. Thousands of people who fled the country have not

returned and 1.5 million people are still internally displaced. This is partly due to the continued rebel attacks and systematic violations of human rights committed mainly by armed groups, the Government army, as well as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan rebel group, especially in the North Kivu Province. Over 150,000 people are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance in the Province, where violence is limiting their access to health care and causing strain on health facilities' financial, material and human resources. In Ituri and Kivu provinces WFP is mainly focusing on providing assistance to IDPs, returnees and host communities while in the east and south of the country the agency provides food to the malnourished communities.

27. There is hope however, as positive developments took place in January 2009 following the launching of the Rwanda/DRC joint operation against the Force Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) rebels, which was concluded in March 2009 with the signature of a peace deal between the Government of DRC and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP). On the part of the Commission, the Chairperson has also been involved in peace negotiations since the launching of CNDP. He has held extensive talks with the President of DRC and other relevant Congolese players as well as the international community representatives in Kinshasa in order to reiterate the AU's position to find lasting political solutions to the crisis in the country, particularly in the north Kivu Province. In order to reinforce his efforts, the Chairperson established an AU Office in Goma which will be involved in monitoring the implementation of the peace deal of January 2009 signed between the Government and the Congolese armed groups. He appealed to the international community to redouble its efforts to find a lasting solution to the problem and consolidate the progress achieved in the promotion of peace, security and stability in the whole country. These efforts will contribute to the return of thousands of victims of forced displacement. DRC is also a country of asylum to more than 155,000 refugees.

28. According to the information provided by the Government of **Gabon**, there were about 8,826 refugees and 4,260 asylum seekers from 23 nationalities being hosted in the country as at 2007. The largest group of refugees and asylum seekers, numbering 9,726 was from the Republic of Congo. With a history of extending hospitality to victims of forced displacement dating back to the 1970's, Gabon works in close collaboration with UNHCR to find durable solutions for the refugees and asylum seekers within its territory, including voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration.

29. The **Republic of Congo** is host to some 24,779 refugees, according to recent UNHCR statistics. Most of the refugees are from neighboring countries, the majority fleeing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

D. Eastern Region

30. The Eastern Region witnessed some positive developments in the humanitarian situation. In spite of these developments, however, the region is still faced with crises such as conflicts and insecurity, recurrent floods and drought, food insecurity as well as the adverse effects of climate change. As a result, these factors increased the

magnitude and complexity of the humanitarian crises and impacted on the forced displacement populations.

31. In January 2009, **Ethiopia** was host to about 80,500 refugees. However, the number has increased to 105,281 according to Government figures of May 2009. This is mainly due to the new arrivals of Eritrean Somali refugees. The bulk of the refugees come from Eritrea (34,084), Somalia (40,456) Sudan (26,066) and Kenya (3,104). It should be noted that a majority of Somali refugees returned home between 1997 and 2005 thereafter all the camps where the Somalis had been living were closed, with the exception of the Kebribeyah site. However, because of the renewed conflicts and violence in southern and central parts of Somalia, two new camps were opened in 2007 and 2008 to accommodate new arrivals of Somalis.

32. **Kenya's** refugee population is currently 320,605 according to UNHCR estimates of April 2009 with a majority being Somalis who account for close to 300,000. More than 60,000 Somalis fled to Kenya in 2008 alone. As of 9 March 2009 almost 260,000 Somalis live in three Dadaab refugee camps and the population continues to increase. In January 2009, the number was about 215,000 thus an increase of about 50,000 within three months. The humanitarian situation is getting worse in Dadaab camps, which are already known to be the world's oldest, biggest and congested. OCHA reported that humanitarian organizations were finding it difficult to extend assistance in such conditions where overcrowding, insufficient water and sanitation posed great health risks. UNHCR reported that in spite of these problems it was finding it difficult to secure an extra piece of land for camp expansion.

33. In the case of IDPs, the Ministry of State for Special Programmes (MoSSP) informed OCHA in April 2009 that there were 80,000 IDPs left in the country. This is a drastic decrease compared to over 300,000 which were reported when the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees visited the country in March 2008. Most of the IDPs are still living in 68 transit camps in the North Rift and South Rift Valleys. WFP and Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) continue to provide food assistance on a monthly basis while in February 2009 a Shelter Project was created which has contributed to the construction and rehabilitation of houses. 5,103 house units were constructed and over 901 houses rehabilitated. However, the IDPs still lack basic services such as adequate sanitation and hygiene, health facilities as well as access to schools. The IDPs are the victims of the post-elections violence of December 2007.

34. In **Madagascar**, the political events in the country have overshadowed the serious humanitarian crises affecting hundreds of thousands of Malagasies, according to reports from the UNOCHA. This has further aggravated the situation of those vulnerable populations already suffering from the effects of a combination of natural disasters including, cyclones, floods, drought, inflated prices and chronic food insecurity. Funding for humanitarian assistance programmes has been limited and appeals for urgent funds to assist the affected populations, including 150,000 drought and malnutrition victims, has not been forthcoming.

35. During the reporting period the Government of **Rwanda** informed the Commission that the country was hosting 55,378 refugees, and out of this number, 50,049 are Congolese from DRC and 2,062 are Burundians and the remaining refugees from various countries who are living in urban areas. The country at the same time was receiving its nationals back. Between January and March 2009, the UN Peacekeeping Mission in DRC (MONUC) with the support of the World Bank through the Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation (DDRRR) Programme repatriated to the country 1,554 people making the total number of returnees since January 2009 to be 5,586. The authorities further stated that by October 2008 3,376,355 refugees returned to the country from the countries of asylum mainly Burundi, DRC, Tanzania, and Uganda.

36. **Somalia** is regarded as one of the most complex humanitarian emergencies in the world. The security situation in most parts of south-central regions remains volatile. However during the months of January to April 2009, other parts of the country showed some security improvements by almost 50 percent. As a result, more than 60,000 IDPs who were living in settlements of Lower and Middle Shabelle regions in south-central and central Somalia returned to north-east Mogadishu. Additionally, some refugees were returning from neighboring countries, in particular from Kenya. On the other hand, despite the positive sign of returns to Mogadishu, the insecurity in some regions of the country combined with drought and lack of livelihoods among the rural and urban people continue to force thousands of Somalis to flee mainly to neighboring countries, especially Kenya. UNHCR assists almost half a million Somali refugees in neighboring countries including Yemen. The number of IDPs stands at 1.3 million as of April 2009.

37. The country needs massive humanitarian aid in order to cope with the numerous challenges that are facing the people. Out of US\$918 million needed for the humanitarian programmes, only US\$251 million has been raised. The most critical areas include security sector, food, education, health services, shelter, agricultural needs and water. Water which is needed by the people and their livestock has been scarce and has resulted in a dramatic increase in water prices and livestock deaths, and people are reported to be walking long distances to fetch water. The poor response to the appeal is affecting millions of people and would also reduce the number of aid workers.

38. The humanitarian situation in **The Sudan** is being considered from two different perspectives: one, on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of January 2005 between the Government of Sudan and Sudanese Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and on the other hand, the Darfur crisis in the west of the country.

39. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought about an end of more than 20 years of civil war. The refugees continue to go back home mainly from the neighboring countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya. As of March 2009, the repatriation of refugees to Southern Sudan and Blue Nile State was 308,248. Over 12,000 returned between January and March 2009. However, the integration process of returns was not progressing well due to funding constraints despite the pledges of US\$4.5 billion made for the period 2005-2007 at the Conference in April 2005 in Oslo, Norway which among

other programmes was to cover the repatriation, reintegration and reconstruction of Southern Sudan. At the same time, the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is causing havoc as the rebels continued to attack, kill and abduct people. As a result, about 55,000 people became victims of forced displacement along the country's border with DRC and Central African Republic. The activities of the humanitarian organizations have also been affected in terms of movements to deliver aid as many roads require armed escort. The security situation was therefore a great concern in western and central Equatorial States. At the same time, the region received new influxes of about 20,000 refugees from the DRC.

40. In Darfur, the general security situation continues to affect the work of the humanitarian organizations as they face harassment, attacks, abduction, physical violence, road ambushes and destruction of their assets. The problems are compounded by the expulsion of 13 humanitarian organizations which created gaps in the provision of basic necessities. The Peace and Security Council and the AU/UN Joint Special Representative for Darfur in April 2009 reported that the general humanitarian situation would become worse by May 2009 if long term measures were not put in place to fill the gaps of the expelled humanitarian organizations. In the meantime, the numbers of IDPs and other affected people are growing continuously while access to rural areas is difficult and is creating a problem for major towns and IDP settlements as people continue to flock to those places. By January 2009, about 2 million people continued to be directly affected by the conflict and out of this number, 1,201,040 are IDPs many of who have been displaced several times. In the same vein, the country hosts 181,605 refugees according to UNHCR figures.

41. **Tanzania's** refugee caseload continues to decrease as thousands of Burundian refugees opt to return to Burundi under the UNHCR voluntary repatriation Programme. It is envisaged that most refugees who have been in the country since 1972 will be locally integrated in the country. More than 170,000 Burundian refugees in the settlements had expressed their wish to be naturalized. About 200,000 and 1,500 Somalis are also living in settlements and other unknown numbers in cities and villages. The total number of refugees in the country is 321,909.

42. The humanitarian situation in **Uganda**, north of the country has greatly improved as the IDP population is approximately 853,000 compared to the number of 2 million in the previous years. More than 1.2 million IDPs returned to their habitual places of residence. WFP provides food to IDPs and returnees numbering over one million. The Government reported that by end of this year, 2009 almost all the IDPs would have returned to their communities or villages. On the other hand, the country is home to 162,132 refugees, the majority from Sudan and continues to receive new cases of refugees from the DRC.

E. Southern Region

43. The situation in Southern Africa was relatively calm during the reporting period. Resumption of repatriation operations which ended in March 2007 for the remaining Angolan refugees mainly in neighboring countries will soon start again. While the region

itself has not produced any significant numbers of refugees or IDPs in recent years, it continues to extend hospitality to thousands of refugees from other African countries, particularly DRC. The region, however, has been prone to natural disasters including droughts, floods and cyclones. During the reporting period, Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia experience significant rainfalls, causing major flooding in the countries. According to OCHA, most of Southern Africa has a higher probability of receiving above average rainfall between April and June 2009, which may yet cause further localised and perhaps extensive flooding.

44. In April 2009, the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons undertook a field assessment mission to **Angola** where they met and exchanged views with government officials and humanitarian organizations on the return and integration of Angolan refugees in their areas of origin, as well as the overall humanitarian situation and post-conflict reconstruction process in the country. According to Angolan government officials, the number of returnees to the country since 2003 is estimated at 450,000, the majority of them are back in their communities/villages in about 20 provinces. About 150,000 Angolan refugees, however, are still in neighboring countries such as the DRC, the Republic of Congo and Zambia. Repatriation exercises are soon to commence for the return of these residual refugees. Angola is also host to 13,000 refugees, mostly from DRC and the rest from various other African countries. During the mission, officials also mentioned that the country was experiencing a steady flow of asylum seekers numbering over 3,000 from all regions of the African continent and the Government was finding it difficult to deal with them since the majority was not genuine refugees.

45. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees delegation expressed solidarity with the Government and peoples of Angola, and made recommendations on how best to assist the Government in its resettlement and reintegration programmes for sustainable development, and lasting solutions for the returnees.

46. In April 2009, an estimated 220,000 people were reportedly affected by floods in the provinces of Cunene, Kuando Kubango, Moxico, Malange, Bie, Huambo and Lunda Sul in Angola, among which about 80,984 were displaced and temporarily settled in camps.

47. According to statistics provided by the Government of **Mozambique's** National Institute for Refugee Support, in March 2009 about 7,257 refugees and asylum seekers were registered in 11 camps around the country. The majority of the refugees (4,398) are resident in Maratane refugee camp, while the second largest group of 1,525 is urban refugees in Maputo. The refugees are mostly from Burundi, DRC and Rwanda, with smaller numbers from various other African countries.

48. In the case of **South Africa**, the country continues to receive refugees and asylum seekers. According to UNHCR, the country hosts an estimated 36,736 refugees and 170,865 asylum seekers.

49. **Zambia**, which has a long history of welcoming victims of forced displacement, is host to about 83,485 refugees. The World Food Programme reports that in 2009, its refugee operations in Zambia will focus mainly on supporting 28,000 DRC refugees based in camps in the North of the country. Additionally, there are also refugees from Angola, Rwanda and Burundi. Ongoing repatriation exercises of DRC refugees are also taking place with the collaboration of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR, and other partner agencies.

50. According to the statistics provided by the Government of **Zimbabwe**, there were 4,175 refugees in the country, as at April 2009, with no records of returnees or internally displaced persons.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

51. In conformity with Executive Council Decisions, EX.CL/Dec. 462(XIV) of the January 2009 Session, and the EX.CL/Dec. 289(IX), the Commission of the African Union together with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees and in close collaboration with AU partners carried out its programme of work in the following areas:

- Assessment missions which helped to sensitize Member States and the international community on the plight of uprooted populations especially refugees and IDPs. The missions urged the donors to share the burden by extending the much-needed assistance to Member States affected by the problem of forced displacement, while urging Member States themselves to create conducive conditions for the return of their nationals. The countries visited were: Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Rwanda, and South Africa. As a way of showing solidarity, recommendations were made to assist the countries to cope with the influx of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.
- Various meetings, seminars and workshops were held concerning forced displacement issues. The most important meetings included:
 - a. The preparatory meetings of the Task Force on the Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons scheduled to take place in October 2009 in Kampala, Uganda;
 - b. The meetings of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees and its Bureau whereby the Work Programme for 2009 was adopted and thereafter, implemented accordingly;
 - c. Meetings with the AU Partners which discussed the joint AU/Partners Work Plan for 2009 and other activities, in particular the convening of the Special Summit and information sharing on forced displacement

issues especially towards the Report to the Executive Council in June 2009;

- d. Meeting of the AU Coordinating Committee on Assistance and Protection to Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (CCAR) on the preparations for the Special Summit and the activities of the CCAR.
- Commemoration of Africa/World Refugee Day under this year's theme, "**Real People, Real Needs**". The occasion was used by the AU Chairperson to sensitize the public about the forthcoming AU Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. Furthermore, the Commission wrote to all Member States to commemorate the occasion with various activities based on the theme.

V. CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

52. The Commission implemented quite a number of programmes according to its mandate but it is still faced with a huge challenging task in the humanitarian field as Africa has the largest number of refugees and IDPs coupled with violent conflicts, recurrent floods and droughts, hunger, climate change, poverty, food insecurity, as well as lack of funding from the international community.

53. In order to improve the humanitarian situation on the Continent, the assistance of the international community is crucial and should honour its pledges made at different donor conferences and meetings. On the other hand, the Commission appeals to Member States to contribute to the AU Special Refugee Contingency Fund of which South Africa has so far been the only contributor. This would go a long way in achieving the objectives of the programmes and operations of return and reintegration of refugees and IDPs, and eventually will contribute to sustainable solutions. The AU on its part will continue to assist the forced displacement population until such a time when they too could return home or to their communities/villages and live peacefully.

54. The Commission once again appeals to Member States to participate in the Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons which will take place in October 2009 in Kampala, Uganda. The Special Summit will address the root causes of forced displacement and come up with a Solemn Declaration for the eventual elimination of the problem of forced displacement. In addition to the Declaration, the Heads of State and Government are expected to endorse and sign the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in Africa which will be the first legally binding instrument on Internally Displaced Persons in the world.

2009

Report of the situation of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa

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