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**REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES
AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA**

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa implemented its Programme of Work for the period February to December 2012. This was in accordance with the previous Recommendations, Decisions and Declarations of the AU Executive Council and Summits of Heads of State and Government, in particular the Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec. 686 (XX) adopted in January 2012.

II. ACTIVITIES

2. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees carried out the following major activities:

- Visits to Member States most affected by the problem of humanitarian situations including natural and man-made disasters;
- Meetings, and Seminars/workshops;
- Responses to natural disasters;
- Commemoration of Africa/World Refugee Day;
- Monitoring the situation of forced displacement

Field Assessment missions

3. During the period under review, delegations of PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees undertook missions to Mauritania, Niger and South Sudan. They assessed the humanitarian situation on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons including victims of natural and man-made disasters. They met and exchanged views with Government Officials, AU Representatives, AU Partners, and various humanitarian Organizations. They also held discussions with refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons during their visits in the refugee camps/settlements and areas of returnees.

4. In the countries emerging from conflicts and disasters the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees noticed an urgent need of support from the international community to assist them to put in place long term development projects that could help them to maintain sustainable livelihoods.

5. The PRC Sub-Committee formulated some recommendations to the attention of the Africa Union in order to support the efforts of the Governments to assist the victims of forced displacement.

6. In South Sudan, the mission was led by H.E. Vivienne T. Wreh, Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia to Ethiopia. The major objective of the mission was to visit transit camps and areas of returnees for refugees and internally displaced persons and identify some projects for long term solutions which the African Union could fund. Additionally, in order to have an insight into the humanitarian situation, security and other challenges facing South Sudan, exchange of views took place with Government officials including local communities, Resident Representative of UNDP, officials of UNHCR as well as other humanitarian agencies.

7. The Government Officials in various Ministries gave detailed information on the current humanitarian situation prevailing in the country especially with regard to forced displacement issues. They stated that the country had received over 300,000 of its nationals back from neighboring countries. Additionally, more than 350,000 people returned from the Sudan since October 2010 while another number of between 500,000 and 700,000 people who were still in the Sudan were also expected to come back. It was pointed out that the return process from Sudan was faced with many challenges such as inadequate transportation infrastructure which at times leaves the returnees stranded for weeks. All in all these large numbers of returnees needed to be resettled and integrated into society. Furthermore, due to LRA activities, the country was also faced with thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries including over 100,000 refugees from Sudan. Some 350,000 IDPs are scattered in the country. The mass movements of people had impacted greatly on the fragile situation obtaining in the country.

8. The key challenges which were emphasized for the New Nation included: security at border areas, allocation of land to returnees for resettlement and integration into society, prevention of inter-community conflicts, infrastructure in particular feeder roads, agricultural tools, food production, and provision of basic services, good governance and accountability. All these factors needed to be dealt with in order to have peace and stability and then concentrate on socio-economic development.

9. The UNDP Resident Representative and the UNHCR officer complimented the information given by Government authorities. The importance of AU initiative which provides technical experts from AU Member States to the civil service under the AU's Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy was underscored. They quoted the good example of three Member States under IGAD initiative which were providing such services and appealed to other countries of follow suite. In the meantime, they pointed out that the humanitarian challenges were enormous and needed the urgent attention of the international community.

10. The delegation visited the Transit Camps at 3 Waist Station and Teacher Training Institute (TTI) at Gudele which are run by UNHCR and its local partner, ACROSS. They were about 2,000 people who arrived by means barges and plane from Khartoum, the Sudan at 3 Waist Station. They were supposed to stay for about two weeks to three months. The UN system under UN cluster is providing basic services. In addition to the tour, the delegation talked to the people who desired to be resettled to their villages or

communities as soon as possible but in the meantime they complained about the types of food given to them, lack of hygienic materials, redundancy, and lack of space.

11. The delegation further visited the facilities at the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) at Gudele which is a site for Teacher Training Institute but the Government gave it to the UN to be used as a transit site for returnees from Khartoum. The running of the camp is similar to the one at 3 Waist Station. They arrive by plane and at the time of visit the place was already having 13,000 to 15,000 people who are mainly composed of single families and have been at the site for two weeks.

12. The mission observed that the returnees in transit camps were eager to be resettled and integrated in their villages/communities as soon as possible but they were still problems of getting their luggage and allocation of land in their villages/communities.

13. Gumbari Primary School is about 16 kms from Yei town and over 70 kms from Juba. Even though the place can be reached through two access roads, it is difficult to get to the school because the roads are bumpy and muddy, especially during the rainy season. Only 4 by 4 Wheel drive or land cruisers can access the place. The chief of the community and the Headmaster of the school briefed the mission about the community and the school. The area has a population of approximately 1,334 people consisting of about 224 households of whom the majority is elderly people and children because the youth leave for greener pastures to other areas in particular in towns.

14. The school is equipped with four buildings including teacher's quarters which need rehabilitation. There is absence of other facilities such as health services, recreational facilities, clean water as well as hygiene and sanitation. There are two teachers including a Headmaster who teach 250 children enrolled in the school from the ages of 7 to 14 years.

15. Since the main objective of the mission was to visit areas of returnees for refugees and internally displaced persons and identify some projects for long term solutions which the African Union could fund, various projects were proposed to the mission at the two transit camps and the rehabilitation of Gumbari Primary School as well as one additional project which the Delegation did not visit. The mission thoroughly examined the projects and recommended that the Commission under Political Affairs Department work closely with the AU Liaison Office in South Sudan to come up with more tangible projects which will benefit directly the returnees and IDPs in the resettlement and integration programmes and contribute towards sustainable development.

16. Concerning Mauritania and Niger it was a follow up to the various meetings held at different levels in connection with humanitarian emergency situation in the Sahel Region which was mainly caused by escalating food and nutrition crisis as a result of the on-going drought, compounded by conflict in Mali, high food prices and insecurity. The return of migrant workers from Libya also contributed to the problem in Niger.

Commemoration of Africa/World Refugee Day: 20 June

17. As is customary, the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees participated in the Commemoration of Africa/World Day which falls on 20 June every year. The activities were carried out according to this year's theme. They included a visit to return and settlement areas in South Sudan and a token donation of US\$ 20,000 was given. Furthermore, the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee made a statement.

Meetings

18. Members of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees held and participated actively in the following meetings:

- Between February and March 2012, the Bureau of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons met twice and considered the Programme of Work of the Sub-Committee. Additionally, they also discussed the dire humanitarian emergency situation in the Sahel Region and the best way to assist the affected countries.
- The Representative of the Sub-Committee was one of the delegates who chaired the Consultative Meeting with Regional Economic Communities on Disaster Management and Response held in Yaounde, Cameroon in February 2012.
- The Representative of the Sub-Committee further chaired the Northern Regional Consultative Meeting took place in Tunis, Tunisia in April 2012 on the promotion of AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

Response to natural disasters

19. Due to the nature of the humanitarian emergency situation prevailing in the Sahel Region, the Bureau of the Sub-Committee met with the Commission to consider the possible humanitarian intervention on behalf of the African Union in response to the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the unfolding complex emergency in the region. More than 16 million people were affected by an escalating food and nutrition crisis as a result of the on-going drought, compounded by conflict in Mali, high food prices and insecurity. This called for urgent concrete actions of which the Bureau endorsed the Commission's proposal to provide humanitarian assistance of US\$ 450,000 as a regional contribution to six most affected countries namely: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

20. Furthermore, the Bureau also accepted the proposal of the Commission to extend US\$ 50,000 to victims of ammunitions explosion disaster in the Republic of Congo.

Monitoring of forced displacement situation

21. The PRC Sub-Committee noted with satisfaction the positive political developments which have resulted in the voluntary repatriation of refugees and IDPs in some countries on the Continent, particularly the Sudanese (Darfur region) South Sudanese, and Ugandans.

22. The Sub-Committee was also concerned about the insecurity situation which was prevailing in some regions of the Continent, such as in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Mali, DRC, Darfur region in Sudan, and in the northern region of Central African Republic. Meanwhile, the PRC Sub-Committee commended the AU Commission for the advocacy role and the efforts it continued to play in order to resolve the crises in the countries affected by conflicts, natural and man-made disasters and problems of forced displacement of populations. This was done through the Implementation of the Plan of Action which emanated from the Outcomes of the 2009 Kampala AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

Cooperation with AU Partners

23. The Chairperson of the AU Coordinating Committee on Protection and Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (CCAR) briefed the Bureau of the Sub-Committee on the activities envisaged to be carried out in 2012 and also on the general humanitarian situation obtaining in Africa. The Sub-Committee was also associated with meetings and workshops of the AU partners.

III. CONCLUSION

24. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons together with the Commission and AU Partners will continue to monitor the situation of forced displacement in Africa in order to ensure that victims of forced displaced population are treated in accordance with the international and regional instruments in the protection of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons. This will be done in line with the Plan of Action for Implementation of the Outcomes of the Kampala 2009 AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

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Report of the sub-committee on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa

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