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**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE ON
REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS:
JANUARY – JULY 2010**

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES, RETURNNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS: JANUARY- JUNE 2010

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons has been executing its mandate of examining in-depth the refugee problem in Africa and making appropriate recommendations to the Executive Council in accordance with its 1996 Plan of Action, adopted in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The Sub-Committee implements its programmes and activities with the assistance of the Department of Political Affairs, through the Division of Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons which coordinates its annual Programme of Work. During the period January to June 2010 the Members of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees undertook several activities.
2. This Report to the Seventeenth Ordinary Session of the Executive Council therefore covers the activities embarked upon by the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees during the period under review, according to its 2010 Programme of Work.

II. ACTIVITIES

Field Assessment Missions of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons

3. Between February to June 2010, the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons undertook field assessment missions to several African Union (AU) Member States affected by the problem of forced displacement, including, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Republic of Congo and Egypt.
4. The various missions assessed the humanitarian situation in the countries visited, through consultations with Government officials, AU Representatives, humanitarian organizations operating on the ground as well as refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and other settlements. During the missions, the delegations advocated for continued support to the governments and humanitarian agencies working on the ground, further assistance and durable solutions for the displaced persons, and called on the relevant Member States to sign, ratify/accede to the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and all other relevant legal instruments on forced displacement.
5. In Central African Republic (CAR), the Mission visited the camps of IDPs and Refugees in Nana Gribizi and Lobaye Prefectures. In its overall observations, it

noted that despite the assistance provided by the Central African Government and the humanitarian aid agencies, primarily the UN, the condition in which many of the displaced persons were living was dire. With over 200,000 refugees and IDPs within its territory, the humanitarian and development challenges in CAR are immense.

6. In concluding its Mission, the Delegation of the PRC Sub-Committee reaffirmed the African Union's Solidarity to the Government of the Central African Republic and the displaced population, and pledged to do what it can to assist in finding short-term and durable solutions to the humanitarian situation in the country. To this end, it recommended that the AU Commission make a financial contribution towards assisting the refugees and IDPs in CAR and called on the international community to also show its solidarity to the Government and people of CAR. Finally, the Delegation called on the Government of CAR to ratify as soon as possible the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and to fully implement the 2008 Law relating to the Status of Refugees in Central Africa, as a means to addressing the challenges of refugees and IDPs within its territory
7. In Chad, the Mission visited refugees and IDPs in Goz Beida, Ouaddaï Region in Eastern Chad. In the exchange with Darfuri refugees in Jabal Refugee Camp, they requested that the AU play a significant role in the Darfur crisis, particularly in the area of justice and property reacquisition. According to the Chadian IDPs visited in Gassire and Koloma, there is a need to reinforce security and infrastructure in their areas of origin, in order to encourage voluntary returns. Upon its conclusion, the Mission recommended, inter-alia, that the AU encourage the Government of Chad and the United Nations (UN) to work in close collaboration to ensure a coordinated and progressive withdrawal of the UN Peacekeeping Mission for Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) from the country, and to make a financial contribution towards meeting the basic needs of the IDPs.
8. During the Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo, the Delegation assessed the large influx of DRC refugees into the Republic of Congo as well as the IDP population in the DRC. The Mission observed that while improvements in the overall security situation could be favorable for return and repatriation, the logistics of such an activity would be difficult given the lack of infrastructure in the areas of origin of the displaced population. In its recommendations, the Mission called on the AU Commission to make a financial contribution towards assisting the Government of DRC and UNHCR in meeting the needs of the displaced as well as in their return and repatriation. Accordingly, the Commission made a contribution of two hundred thousand United States Dollars (\$200,000) to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) towards assisting DRC refugees in the Republic of Congo, \$200,000 for refugees and IDPs in DRC, and another \$6,000 to the *Centre d'Accueil Béthanie, an orphanage* in the Republic of Congo for DRC refugee orphans. The contributions were handed over to the beneficiaries by the Delegation of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees.

9. In Egypt the Mission observed the close collaboration between the Government and UNHCR in delivering assistance to 41,000 refugees of Eritrean, Iraqi, Somali and Sudanese origins. It lauded the Egyptian Government's open-door policy for asylum seekers and refugees, but noted that issues such as guarantees to socio-economic rights become difficult as nationals are also competing for similar opportunities like employment and higher education. The Mission recommended that a financial contribution be made by the AU Commission towards providing school materials for refugee women and children. Consequently, a contribution of \$50,000 was made by the Commission to UNHCR.

Commemoration of Africa/World Refugee Day 2010

10. On 20 June 2010 the Members of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs participated in the Commemoration of Africa/World Refugee Day. The theme for 2010 was, "*Home: they took my home but I need a future.*" As part of its activities in commemorating the Day, the Sub-Committee visited Sherkole refugee camp in Western Ethiopia hosting refugees from South Sudan, and also extended through the Commission, a \$50,000 in-kind contribution to assist newly arrived Somali refugees in Ethiopia, in line with the theme.
11. Additionally, a ceremony was organized by the Commission to handover other contributions of \$50,000 each to Member States affected by the problem of forced displacement that had been previously visited by the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, including Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Congo, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Sahrawi Republic and Uganda. The funds were primarily channeled through UNHCR, with the exception of Angola where the contributions were made to the Ministry of Social Reintegration and Sahrawi Republic where the funds were made to the Sahrawi Red Crescent Society.

Meetings

12. On 11 March 2010, the Bureau of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs met on behalf of the whole Sub-Committee, to consider and adopt the Programme of Work of the Sub-Committee for the period February to December 2010. During its meeting, the Bureau also discussed the challenges encountered in deploying assessment missions to Member States affected by the problem of forced displacement, the insufficiency of funds at the Commission to meet the recommended contributions to assist Member States, and the planned activities for the implementation of the outcomes of the AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.
13. A meeting of the whole Sub-Committee was thereafter held on 21 May 2010 wherein it considered, among others, all the reports and recommendations from the field assessment missions recently undertaken by Members of the Sub-Committee.

14. The Members of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees also participated in various other meetings in accordance with Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec. 529(XVI) adopted on 2 February 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, requesting “*the Commission to elaborate a Plan of Action for the promotion and implementation of the outcomes of the Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons,*” including the Member States’ Experts and Ministerial Conference on Forced Displacement Matters held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 1 to 5 June 2010.

III. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

15. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees will continue to implement its Programme of Work throughout the remainder of the year. Due to insufficient funding, however, it is not expected that the Sub-Committee will realize all its planned activities for 2010, particularly the remaining field assessment missions scheduled to be undertaken. In order for the Sub-Committee to efficiently carry out its mandate, a number of recommended actions should be considered. These include:

- a. Engagement by the Members of the Sub-Committee in resource mobilization to fund its activities and that of the Commission in addressing the needs of Member States affected by the problem of forced displacement in line with the provisions in the draft Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Outcomes of the Special Summit
- b. Advocating for the implementation of the outcomes of the AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, particularly with regard to encouraging signature and ratification/accession to the Kampala Convention, with a view to its entry into force by December 2010;
- c. Seeking short-term measures and durable solutions to address the problem of forced displacement, particularly when making recommendations for countries visited by the Sub-Committee; and
- d. Increasing the visibility of the African Union’s efforts in responding to humanitarian crises and in finding durable solutions to the refugee and IDP problems on the Continent.

2010

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