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

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRC 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 together with the Commission of the African Union and in collaboration with the AU Partners implemented its Plan of Action which was adopted in 1996 in Yaounde, Cameroon, during the meeting of the Council of Ministers as well as its Work Plan for the year 2012; and also in accordance with various Resolutions, Recommendations, Decisions of Council.

II. ACTIVITIES

Meetings

2. In October 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya, the Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees chaired the African Union Symposium on the Theme: "Citizenship in Africa: Preventing Statelessness, Preventing Conflict". It was part of implementation measure of the October 2009 Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons held in Kampala, Uganda in which the AU pledged to support UNHCR's efforts in promoting the accession to and implementation of the Conventions on statelessness among African Member States as stated in Recommendation 24. The recommendation received impetus when the African Union reiterated its commitment at the Ministerial Meeting of States Parties, to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, in December 2011 in Geneva.

3. It was in this context that the symposium was held with the aim of raising awareness among Member States on the status of the statelessness on the African continent and the focus was on key provisions of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The meeting was also convened to create a forum for open discussions and suggest solutions to the problems of citizenship and statelessness. The meeting thereafter, recommended amongst others, a continental instrument that best reflects African realities in the area of statelessness.

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

4. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons visited Mauritania and Niger between August and September 2012. The missions to Burundi, Tanzania, South Sudan and Zambia were scheduled to take place in November 2012 and their findings will be appended to this report.

Missions to Mauritania and Niger

5. The Sub Committee, in carrying out its assessment mission to the Sahel region chose to visit two of the affected countries with the following objectives:

- Express solidarity with the Governments and peoples of the region over the continued dire humanitarian situation in the Sahel area occasioned by the chronic food insecurity;
- Consult with Government officials charged with refugee and other humanitarian matters, UN Agencies, and other non-governmental actors;
- Evaluate the situation of the Malian refugees in the region;
- Pay visit to a Malian refugee camp and show solidarity with those at the camp;
- Convey appreciation of the African Union to the governments hosting the refugees, in particular, the host communities for their hospitality and continued assistance to the affected populations;
- Evaluate the implementation of the protection mandate of both the governments and humanitarian agencies in affected countries;
- Evaluate the humanitarian situation occasioned by the Sahel food insecurity situation, with a view to assessing the nature of support required by the governments of the region;
- Evaluate and analyse the root causes of the overall humanitarian situation and proffer durable solutions that takes into account the building of resilience in communities by enhancing their means of livelihoods; and
- Explore ways and means in which governments and other humanitarian actors can scale up their overall support to affected populations in the region.

Mauritania

6. The visit to Mauritania took place in August 2012. The Chairperson of the Bureau of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees was Head of the delegation. The delegation met and held extensive discussions with government officials, UN agencies and other humanitarian actors in the country that included: International Federation of Red Cross & Crescent (IFRC), International Committee of the Red Cross & Crescent (ICRC), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP). They gave detailed information on their functions as it related to forced displacement issues.

7. The Head of delegation informed the governments of the need to show solidarity with the affected populations and the need to respond by donating a token sum of US\$450,000 for food assistance, through the World Food Programme, to four affected countries, namely, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The delegation was informed about the Malian crisis which is multi-faceted in nature and therefore, called for a response that recognizes and factors this into its action. In particular, the need to examine critically the root causes of the conflict becomes an overriding element to the entire peace process. The recognition of the complex nature of the crisis holds the key to the durable solution of the conflict. It was stated that the Mauritanian authorities also provide assistance to the refugee population in the areas of security, health and other social issues. The camp in Mbeera is holding over 104,000 refugees.

8. The delegation visited the Agence Nationale D'Appui et D'Insertion des Refugies (ANRI). The agency was created in 2008 to handle the repatriation of Mauritians forcefully displaced across the border following the events of 1989 in that country. The agency is charged with the implementation of the Tripartite Agreement between Mauritania, Senegal and the UHCR. To date the agency has been able to resettle over 34,000 persons, comprising of about 5,800 families. The resettlement programme includes the introduction and development of agro-pastoral activities in areas around the Senegal River in the South of the country, development of infrastructures that include the building of mosques, schools and hospitals. Furthermore, the agency is involved in ensuring the registration of returning Mauritania nationals, in a bid to ensure that they do not lose their nationality. This particular point was appreciated by the delegation as a best practice to be shared with other AU Member States. It was noted that about 1 million persons are affected by the food insecurity situation in Mauritania, thus representing about a third of the national population. Mauritania it was noted imports about 70% of its food needs and the current high prices of food on the international market further worsens the situation. Furthermore, the absence of rain in the limited farming area translates to chronic shortage of food through dwindling local production and food imports as a result of high food prices, a combination of which is exemplified by acute food insecurity.

9. In order to stave off famine, a number of approaches are being explored and they include the broad provision of food assistance to affected population through several programmes including those that focus primarily on children and other vulnerable groups. Special attention is also said to be given to livestock protection to build livelihoods of pastoral communities.

Visit to the Mbeera Camp

10. The mission visited Mbeera refugee camp, which is about 1500 km to Nouakchott on the Mauritania / Mali border in Eastern part of Mauritania. The camp is home to 104,109 refugees or 20,585 families from Mali. These people have been displaced by the on-going Malian conflict. A majority of the refugees are women and children. 63.4% of the refugees are children between the ages 0-17, 34.5% are between the ages of 18-59, while just 2.1% are over 60. At the moment the influx has reduced to about 300-500 new arrivals per day. Due to the swelling number of arriving refugees, the UNHCR will

establish a second camp to accommodate the new arrivals. The existing camp is now full and can hardly accommodate new arrivals and with the conflict across the border festering rather than abating.

11. In the area of security, the Government of Mauritania maintains the overall security in and around the Camp, while both the government and the UNHCR exert maximum effort to ensure that the camp maintains its humanitarian character and integrity. Other humanitarian actors in the Camp include Oxfam that is providing facilities in the area of Water, Sanitation and Heigene (WASH). Nutrition, health and education also receive adequate attention through the activities of UNICEF.

12. It is evident from the visit that more resources were still needed for the maintenance of the existing camp as well as for the proposed one.

Niger

13. The Sub-Committee visited Niger end August and early September 2012. The mission met a wide range of high ranking Government officials: Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Secretary General of Baleyara Commune, and humanitarian organizations namely; UNHCR, OCHA, FAO, UNICEF and IOM. The officials and agencies gave a detailed analysis of the current complex humanitarian situation prevailing in the country and the steps taken so far to tackle the problem.

14. The Government of Niger thanked the African Union for the gesture of the donation made towards alleviating the food insecurity situation in the Sahel in general and in Niger Republic in particular. Reference was made to the humanitarian situation in the Sahel which was observed to have been further compounded by the on-going conflict in Mali. In its analysis of the food insecurity situation in Niger, the government noted that the little grain that is produced in the country gets sold on the Nigerian market for higher prices thus deepening the shortage experienced at home. The effect and impact of flooding and other climatic vagaries, including other parasitic reasons has further adversely affected land, livestock and fisheries production. The delegation was also informed about the recent flooding that occurred in several parts of the country and led to 35,000 internally displaced to be housed in primary schools. It was further pointed out that 55 percent of the country's children suffer from chronic malnutrition. The refugee population in the country is estimated to be 61,880 all of whom are Malians with the exception of 3,000 Algerian origin.

15. A symbolic hand-over ceremony was organized by the World Food Programme to represent AU support to the four Sahelian states of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger Republic. The ceremony took place in the village of Winditan, in the Commune of Baleyara, located 90 Km North-East of Niamey. The component of the donation that got to Niger secured the purchase of 137 metric tons. The food assistance reached about 1166 households or 7611 beneficiaries, composed of 4017 men and 3594 women. It was in recognition of the dire situation subsisting in the region that the token gesture was made.

Observations and Recommendations from the Niger and Mauritania mission

16. The immediate observation of the delegation is the fact of the cyclical nature of the drought situation in the Sahel occasioning frequent food insecurity. Second, the adverse effect of climate change has further compounded the environmental situation to the extent that its consequences now manifest in several ways, including through perennial drought and creeping displacement all combine to further reduce the resilience of communities to withstand adverse environmental conditions.

17. Given the observations, it is imperative that medium and longer term solutions be proffered and implemented in order to achieve sustainable development in the region. To this end, it is recommended that the African Union in collaboration with its partners and Regional Economic Communities organize a conference to examine in details of durable solutions at the national, regional and continental levels, that detail medium and longer term solutions to the challenge of food insecurity, in the Sahel and other arid regions of the continent.

18. Noting that the conflict in Mali further serves as a driver for forced displacement, in an otherwise depressed region, and further recognizing that far reaching efforts is being deployed to arrive at a lasting resolution of the conflict, calls upon leaders on the continent to deepen the exploration of causative elements of the conflict to ensure that all the various issues are resolved by not leaving any stone unturned. This is to ensure that all grievances are given requisite hearing.

19. That the governments of Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger be commended for hosting Malian refugees and for the hospitality extended to the affected populations, particularly by the host communities in the two sisterly countries.

III. CONCLUSION

20. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons will continue to implement its Programme of Work while at the same recommend to the Executive Council to critically consider the recommendations that emanated from various missions, as some of them are of utmost urgency and importance for implementation.

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Addendum

**REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES
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ADDENDUM – MISSION TO ZAMBIA

ADDENDUM
**REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES,
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Mission to Zambia

1. The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons visited Zambia from 17 to 21 December 2012. H.E. Makayat Safouesse Lazare, Ambassador of the Republic of Congo was the Leader of the delegation. The objectives of the mission were:

- i) to hold consultations with Government officials, in particular with officials working in humanitarian issues, officials of UNHCR, WFP, IOM, as well as implementing partners of the Government;
- ii) To assess the impact refugees and asylum seekers have had on the country and also evaluate the humanitarian conditions by visiting the refugees and asylum seekers;
- iii) to sensitize Member States and the international community as well as the local population through the press on the problem of refugees;
- iv) to express appreciation to the Government including local communities for their exerted efforts and the steps taken to provide asylum to the refugees for almost 50 years;
- v) to have the opportunity to see on ground how the Government and other humanitarian organizations were coping in terms of providing assistance and protection to refugees and asylum seekers;
- vi) to sensitize Member States and the International Community to continue contributing generously towards projects of the refugees; and
- vii) to make a review of the root causes of refugee movements and support the Government the steps so far taken for the local integration of Angolan refugees as one of the durable solutions to the refugee problems.

2. The mission met with high level Government Officials in the office of Ministry of Home Affairs, UNHCR, WFP, IOM and implementing partners mainly from Government parastatals and held fruitful discussions. Additionally, the mission was also afforded an opportunity to visit Muyukwayukwa settlement about 600 kilometres from Lusaka, the settlement where the former refugees are being integrated.

3. The leader of delegation first thanked the Government of the Republic of Zambia for its continued efforts and commitment to grant asylum to thousands refugees and asylum seekers for almost 50 years and also honouring international legal instruments on forced displacement including the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons, (Kampala Convention) which came into force on 6 December 2012. He encouraged the country to domesticate the Convention as it will go a long way in easing the suffering of IDPs.

4. He also commended the Government the steps they have taken to integrate Angolan refugees while other refugees are self-reliant in the settlements and urban areas, thus the main objective for the Sub-Committee to visit the country and show solidarity with the Government and the refugees by contributing the total sum of US\$ 100,000.00 to support local integration of 10,000 Angolan Refugees in the country of which the host communities would also benefit.

5. The Minister of Home Affairs expressed his appreciation for the AU Delegation and was very grateful for the donation made in support of local integration of 10,000 Angolan refugees in the country of which the host communities would also benefit. He called upon the international community to follow suit. Detailed information on the situation of the former Angolan refugees leading up to the local integration was given with emphasize that not all the remaining former Angolan would qualify for local integration as there was criteria. Project proposals for international community would also be developed for smooth local integration which was expected to take about three years to complete.

6. According to Government figures, the current refugee population in the country is about 48,000 comprising about 23,000 Angolans, and 14,000 Congolese from DRC and the rest mainly from Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia. There are urban refugees and asylum seekers while spontaneously self-settled refugees are found in 28 Districts of 5 provinces, mainly along the country's borders with Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It should be noted that several refugees both in settlements and urban areas are self-reliant.

7. At the meeting a symbolic hand-over ceremony of US\$ 100,000.00 to UNHCR for local integration of 10,000 Angolan refugees took place. The Minister also used the occasion to flag-off issuance of the immigration permits to one family under the local Integration Programme.

Visit to Mayukwayukwa Settlement

8. The mission visited Mayukwayukwa settlement in Kaoma District in the Western Province of the country about 600 kms from Lusaka. It was established in 1966 and is one of the oldest refugee settlements in Africa with 10,030 refugees and out of that number 7,878 are Angolans. A majority of refugees are self-reliant as they are subsistence farmers. The various Government implementing partners are operating in such areas as immigration, security and police, community development, health, water and education. They gave detailed information in their areas of work. The delegation visited some sites namely; clinics, secondary school, turbine, and the settlement in general. Additionally, the delegation witnessed the process of application for local integration by some former refugees.

Observations and Recommendations

Observations

9. The Zambian authorities, humanitarian organizations as well as the refugees appreciated the assessment mission of the African Union to the country and tremendous courtesy and assistance were accorded to the delegation accordingly.

10. The Government was gratified for the African Union donation of US\$ 100,000 towards the local integration of Angolan refugees which would also benefit the local community, the first of its kind for the integration.

11. The mission recognized and acknowledged the important role that the Government, UN Agencies as well as Government implementing partners were doing in trying to cope with the thousands of refugees and asylum seekers.

12. The discussions and exchange of views with government officials, UN agencies and Government implementing partners as well as the visit to the settlement gave an insight of the humanitarian situation which would be used to solicit funds from the international community.

13. The mission observed that the Government is faced with enormous task in carrying out the local integration process of Angolan refugees to fulfil its commitment of integration.

14. The mission was successful in fulfilling its objectives because of the excellent work programme drawn up by the government and the UNHCR and the cooperation extended to the delegation throughout the visit.

15. The mission therefore wishes to express its highest appreciation and gratitude to the Government and the UNHCR to facilitate the mission.

Recommendations

16. It should be noted that the initial African Union donation of US\$ 100,000.00 was to support the local integration of 10,000 Angolan Refugees in the country and the host communities in the areas of water points (US\$ 50,000) and two existing primary schools (US\$ 50,000). However, after visiting Mayukwayukwa settlement it was of most importance that the money be utilized where it is most needed.

17. It is in this context that the delegation therefore recommends that between 50 percent and 65 percent of the money should go towards the replacement of worn out spare parts and upgrading of the turbine. The turbine was installed by an Italian NGO, COSPE in 1990 with a capacity of 24 kilo watts. It first served 31 households but later on 72 households were benefitting and this was in addition to being used as irrigation and assisting in the production of maize in the settlement. This turbine would be upgraded to 1 megawatts in order to enable the provision of electricity to Mayukwayukwa settlement including the secondary school and clinic and as far as the surrounding area of Kaoma province, thus benefitting the entire settlement and beyond. The remaining money should then be used for water points. The money would still be given to UNHCR to implement the programmes.

18. Furthermore, Zambia is still struggling to cope with the thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, and recently with the local integration of thousands of Angolans. The government therefore needs the assistance of the international community while on the other hand it needs the cooperation and collaboration of humanitarian agencies to meet its obligations according to international laws in the following areas:

- The urgency to Implement local integration programme for former 10,000 Angolan refugees;
- The need to continue supporting the efforts of the country to cater for refugees and asylum seekers;

- The need to work closely with the Governments of Angola for local integration of Angolan refugees and countries of asylum for eventual returnee of their nationals;
- The need for African Union to continue sensitizing Member States and the International Community towards assisting the refugees and asylum seekers and contribute towards the local integration of Angolans; and
- The PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and internally Displaced Persons to continue monitoring the developments of local integration of Angolan refugees.

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