



Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations

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STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 65: "REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH
COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING
TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS
AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS"**

AT THE

70TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, November 4, 2015
United Nations, New York

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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

Kenya welcomes the reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Secretary-General, respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

It is now 25 years since Kenya began hosting refugees.

As the second largest refugee-hosting country in Sub-Saharan Africa, with a total of 605,364 people of concern, in a sub-region with the largest refugees and internally displaced population, we attach high priority on matters concerning refugees.

We are committed to continue fulfilling our international obligations in conformity with the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 OAU Convention on Refugee Protection.

Our commitment to the principle of international co-operation in the context of responsibilities and burden-sharing is unequivocal. We firmly believe the management of refugees is a global responsibility that must be shared.

Kenya highly values the important work being carried out by UNHCR. In particular, we attach great importance to our partnership.

Mr. Chairman,

The burden of hosting refugees is enormous. It has adversely impacted on our scarce material and financial resources that are required in other priority areas.

Nevertheless, we continue to welcome, host and protect refugees in accordance with our tradition. However, our hospitality is not infinite.

Mr. Chairman,

We face three specific challenges related to hosting refugees. They include the threat posed by terrorism, environmental degradation of refugee hosting areas and the decline in donor financial support for management and protection of refugees.

The last point is captured in the High Commissioner's Report. He has lamented the fact that global humanitarian funding has not kept pace with humanitarian needs.

Despite the challenges, the Government is working closely with the UNHCR in the search for durable solutions to facilitate voluntary return of refugees to their countries of origin – the great majority are from Somalia.

We share the High Commissioner's sentiment that comprehensive strategies can give impetus to solutions to protracted refugee situations.

Kenya supports the change in approach to humanitarian assistance from “care and assistance” to supporting refugee livelihoods. We believe this approach will certainly prepare them for their future back home.

With regard to repatriation of Somali refugees, some initial progress has been made, however, the process appears to have slowed down. An estimated 50,000 Somali refugees voluntarily returned to Somalia in 2015. They were mostly refugees who migrated to Kenya following the 2011/2012 drought in the Horn of Africa.

More recently, a total of 2,969 refugees have voluntarily returned back to Somalia under the framework of the Tripartite Agreement between the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, and UNHCR. The focus has been to ensure a safe and dignified return. Many have settled in regions which have stabilized following the end of conflict. However, in other regions, security concerns still persist.

We envisage that the repatriation of the refugees will come to a standstill in view of the impending El Nino phenomenon in Somalia. It is projected that El Nino is likely to cause flooding leading to a humanitarian crisis.

Mr. Chairman,

Kenya believes successful repatriation and settlement of refugees back to Somalia can only succeed if they are given the necessary incentives. It is therefore, necessary to put up infrastructure in stabilized areas. These should include building schools, hospitals and water holes.

It will also be necessary to strengthen the Somali National army and provide training to civilian police to provide security in stabilized areas. We are convinced this would prevent the recycling of refugees back to Kenya or any other country for that matter.

My delegation welcomes the Compact between the Federal Government of Somalia and development partners who have established the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Centerpiece of the New Deal partnership whose objective is to enhance the delivery of assistance to all Somalis. We also welcome the Somalia UN Multi Partner Trust Fund and the eight flagship programmes established to support key priority areas.

We believe the peace-building and financing architecture can contribute significantly to developing sustainable institutional capacity by placing Somali institutions in the lead.

Mr. Chairman,

The refugee crisis in Europe should be a matter of concern to all of us. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children have been forced to leave their homes.

They are fleeing from war and death. Unfortunately, the focus of attention is how to stop the refugee flows and never the cause.

Perhaps, this is because we do not want to face the truth.

We need to speak out about why the problem is occurring and what needs to be done for the problem to be addressed.

We must show sympathy and compassion for the suffering. A cavalier approach will not be helpful.

We should not wait to see horrific pictures of a drowned three year-old Syrian refugee boy washed ashore in Turkey, to provoke reaction by showing compassion at appropriate moments.

The refugees are fleeing primarily war-torn countries. They are just one symptom of the crisis. It is our policies in those countries that are leading to greater human suffering.

The saddest thing about this crisis is that we are failing those in need. The very tenets that underpin refugee protection have been ignored. We must learn to apply global policies relating to refugees consistently everywhere.

We have turned our backs to the principles of humanity that are at the very heart of the United Nations. We have failed to adhere to the principle of non-discrimination, enshrined 1951 Refugee Convention and international humanitarian law.

We must speak out and do what we can to reduce the suffering and address the root causes of this humanitarian crisis.

Finally, **Mr. Chairman**, my delegation would like, once again, to re-affirm Kenya's commitment to honouring its international obligations relating to refugees.

We urge the international community to provide financial support to refugee-host countries and the UNCHR, in view of the magnitude of the refugee crisis that we face.

I thank you!