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STATEMENT BY

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(SOCIAL, CULTURAL & HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS)
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE

68th SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON BEHALF OF SADC

IN THE

THIRD COMMITTEE

ON

AGENDA ITEM 62:

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES
AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

New York,
November 6, 2013
Mr. Chairperson,

It is my honour and privilege to speak on behalf of SADC Member States namely, Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zimbabwe and my own country, Zambia.

Allow me to congratulate you and others members of the Bureau for the splendid work you have done so far and I assure you of SADC’s unwavering support.

Mr. Chairperson

SADC welcomes the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and takes note of the recommended institutional reforms for more effective delivery. SADC is cognisant of the fact that millions of people around the world continue to flee their homeland due to insecurity caused by war, genocide, torture and persecution. Complex insecurities continue to threaten international peace and stability. These insecurities are causing extreme economic shocks thereby distabilizing economies of member countries. In addition, the momentum to attain the MDG goals is equally affected.
Mr Chairperson

SADC has not been spared by these mass movements of people. It is a fact that conflicts in Southern Africa and neighbouring regions have, over the years, resulted in the movement of millions of refugees seeking refuge and asylum in neighbouring countries. We are mindful of the fact that in order to have lasting peace there is need to put in place mechanisms that will lead to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and also explore the root causes of these conflicts.

Mr. Chairperson

SADC reaffirms its commitment to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as amended by the 1967 Protocol. Accordingly, SADC undertakes to respect, and give full effect, at regional and national levels, to the principle of *non-refoulement*, and to observe international standards for refugee protection, bearing in mind the divergent needs of different refugees.

SADC’s commitment towards addressing the problem of refugees is further expressed in the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by SADC and the UN High Commission for Refugees in 1996 that governs management of refugees in the region. The Memorandum of Understanding commits Member States to address the social, economic
and political issues in the Southern African region that have a bearing on
the root causes of forced population displacement, refugee protection,
provision of humanitarian assistance and the search for durable
solutions.

SADC has re-doubled its efforts to finding resolutions aimed at
resolving long standing conflicts in the region and consolidation of
peace, national reconciliation and democratic governance. SADC
member states have begun to reap these benefits as the region is
relatively safe and has created opportunities for refugees to return to
their home countries. However, despite these positive developments the
region continues to receive an influx of people in search of safety and
peace from within and into the region. It is in this regard that SADC
continues to call upon all partners to ensure that there is lasting peace
epecially in the Great Lakes region

Mr. Chairperson

SADC as a region recognises the need to balance the potential security
risks associated with hosting refugees against the benefit of regional
integration that encourages the movement of people for economic
development. In this vein, Article 28 of the SADC Protocol on the
Facilitation of Movement of Persons obligates Member States to adhere
to relevant international agreements to which they are parties, including
the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Under the Protocol, SADC Member States affirm their commitment to co-operate with the International Organisation for Migration and the Office of the UN High Commission for Refugees on matters relating to refugees.

Additionally, the SADC Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation outlines strategies for social re-integration of refugees. Specifically under objective 3 - “To prevent, contain and resolve inter and intra-state conflict by peaceful means”- recommended strategies include:

i. Establishing a common understanding on the target groups for re-integration and identifying partners for funding;

ii. Developing a hand book on social reintegration;

iii. Sharing the best experience and practices of the region on social re-integration of demobilised combatants, refugees and internally displaced persons; and

iv. Organising training workshops and seminars.

**Mr. Chairperson**

SADC member states would like to assure the international community that they will continue to address the root causes of refugee movement and internal displacement through preventative diplomacy, facilitation of
resolution of conflicts and the minimisation of tensions. We also wish to thank members of the international community, in particular, the Office of the UNHCR for assistance they continue to offer to refugees in the region. We however, call upon the international community, the United Nations, the UNHCR in particular, and other relevant organisations to support and assist host Governments in fulfilling their responsibilities towards refugees in a manner consistent with the principles of international refugee law on one hand while taking into account legitimate national security, social and economic interests.

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, allow me to speak in my national capacity, Zambia has responded to the call by UNHCR to provide alternative legal stay arrangements to those refugees whose legal stay had expired and have complied with certain criteria established by the countries, where they came from and Zambia. Basically with these arrangement those who wish to return voluntary to their respective homes will be facilitated to do so and those who decide to remain and be re integrated into the Zambia community that will be facilitated by the Zambian Government. The Zambian government continues to work with all relevant stakeholder to ensure that refugees who are present in the country are granted their rights as enshrined in the international conventions.

I thank you