STATEMENT BY

H.E. MR. ISMAEL A. GASPAR MARTINS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE THIRD COMMITTEE

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

6 NOVEMBER 2013, NEW YORK

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
Mr. President,

At the outset, allow us to join the speakers that preceded us in congratulating you for having been elected to preside over this session, and for the far-sighted manner in which you have been conducting the work of this Executive Committee.

We would like to start by saluting all present, and especially His Excellency High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres. We take this opportunity to convey the recognition and deep appreciation of the Angolan Government for your invaluable contribution and personal commitment to finding the best solutions for the most recent and complex humanitarian crises that we have faced in different regions of the globe, particularly in the Middle East, affecting thousands of people who are forced to cross the borders of their countries in search of refugees where available.

Angola encourages your efforts and urges the international community to demonstrate greater solidarity and more incisive action, not only to mitigate the effects of emergencies, but especially to deal with the root causes which are at the source of dramatic situations we are witnessing in many countries, with the violation of human rights and discrimination against refugees, often considered only a statistic, cost or a burden.

We align ourselves to the statement made by Zambia on behalf of SADC.

Mr. President,

In line with the overall strategic priorities of the UNHCR, particularly the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, the Angolan Government is currently regulating the right to asylum, which is established in our national legislation, particularly:

a) Provide a clear definition of the conditions and procedures for granting refugee status in the Republic of Angola;

b) Establish a coordination mechanism among national agencies involved in granting asylum,

c) Define the role of each agency intervening at different stages of the process of granting asylum in order to make it efficient.

This process is in final stages and we already have a Preliminary Draft Law on the Right to Asylum and Refugee Status, which clearly defines all the procedures for granting and withdrawing refugee status in Angola, in strict compliance with international instruments relating to refugees.

Regarding Angolan refugees who left the country due to the long armed conflict in Angola, which ended only in 2002, many Angolans are still
living in the foreign countries where they established residence. The status of these Angolan refugees needs to be reviewed, given that the country now lives a period of peace and political stability.

In this context, review process is underway, based on the provisions contained in paragraphs 6 (A) (e) and (f) of the UNHCR Statute, Article 1C (5) and (6) of the Geneva Convention of 1951 on the Status of Refugees, and Article I (4) (e) of the African Union Convention of 1969 on refugees.

We remain committed and therefore wish to continue our discussions with host countries the strategies and comprehensive solutions regarding those Angolans who no longer enjoy refugee status since 2012 and have not yet returned to the country, and we reiterate our commitment to continue making efforts to improve dignified care to refugees in order to safeguard their conditions in these countries.

To this end, during the months of July and August, tripartite meetings were held by the representatives of the Angolan Government, with the UNHCR, the Republic of Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, DRC and Zambia, creating legal and technical conditions to ensure the safe return of Angolan refugees in those countries.

It is with this goal that the Republic of Angola has requested the Republic of South Africa a moratorium until December 2013, as deadline for the application of the cessation clause of refugee status to Angolans in this country.

On the World Refugee Day, the Zambian Government and the Angolan Government met and agreed on the number of refugees allowed to stay in the Zambian territory as a result of the local integration carried out by the Government of this country.

Thanks to the support of the UNHCR, IOM and the Government of Botswana, on Wednesday November 1st, 2013, the last of a group of 461 Angolan refugees returned from Botswana at the end of the voluntary repatriation Programme.

Angola believes that the international instruments to which our States are party should prevail as a reference and guidance for the definition of durable solutions for Angolan citizens who still remain in different host countries. In this connection, we reiterate our appeal and seek the understanding of the host countries especially regarding deadlines for regularization of immigration status.

We cease this opportunity to express our appreciation for the dignified and humane treatment that has been provided by different countries to former Angolan refugees, and on behalf of the Angolan Government, we would like to express our deep gratitude.