Statement

By

The Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

At

The 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

on


October 2013

New York
Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me thank, on behalf of the Government of Ethiopia, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, for his comprehensive report. The report provided an account on a wide-range of humanitarian activities carried out by UNHCR with regards to refugees and internally displaced persons in many parts of the world. I also wish to express my delegation's support for UNHCR's work and professionalism demonstrated in these most demanding circumstances of today's world.

Mr. Chairman,

The precarious situations of refugees and internally displaced persons in many parts of the world are a worrying phenomenon for all of us. We have been witnessing that the number of refugees and displaced persons in the world particularly in Middle East and Africa is increasing as conflicts have continuously uprooted millions of people and prevented others from returning to their countries. This situation has also become very complex in the Horn of Africa which is being further exacerbated by the ongoing instability and other predicaments unfolding in the sub-region.

Ethiopia has a long tradition of receiving and hosting refugees from all corners of its borders and has maintained its open-door policy to welcome and give protection to those who seek asylum in its territory. Despite environmental and security related implications of hosting refugees and displaced persons, Ethiopia
is currently hosting over 415,000 refugees from neighboring countries, including Somalia, Eritrea and the two Sudans.

Mr. Chairman,

Ethiopia’s policies on refugees and returnees matters are governed by the principles enshrined in the 1951 United Nations Convention and its protocol of 1967 as well as the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa. In order to properly implement these International and regional instruments and other domestic laws related to refugees, my government has enacted National Refugee Proclamation enacted in July 2004 that established legislative framework to administer the situation of refugees and returnees in Ethiopia. As a matter of principle and in discharging our responsibilities, Ethiopia has undertaken a number of activities aimed at providing protection, security and safety to refugees and displaced persons.

All programs and activities are aimed at providing humanitarian and other necessary provisions in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other partners as well as pertinent Organizations. These humanitarian activities are also guided by the principle of strengthening people-to-people relations. We believe that strengthen people to people relations would have long term positive impact on the lives of refugees. These programs are being implemented with the view to facilitate the repatriation and reintegration of returnees, meet emergency and regular needs of refugees, facilitate the smooth social relationship between refugees and hosting communities,
administer refugee camps as well as to maintain law and order among the refugees. As mentioned above, all these activities are being implemented with the smooth collaborative work and close cooperation with UNHCR, donor community and other humanitarian organizations within the country.

Mr. Chairman,

As to seeking long-term solution to the plight of refugees and improve their living conditions, the Ethiopian Government, together with UNHCR, has launched an "Out-of-Camp-Scheme". This new policy essentially allows refugees being hosted in different camps within Ethiopia, and without a criminal record to live outside the camps in any parts of the country. Moreover, the government has created a favorable condition for thousands of refugees to continue their studies in universities and higher-learning institutions so that they will be productive citizens when they return to their homeland. The skill training opportunities and income generating activities to refugees have significantly reduced their secondary movement to other countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Last but not least, Ethiopia remains committed to continue to fully discharge its obligations under the international and regional refugee conventions by pursuing our open-door policy towards refugees. In this regard, we would like to thank the UNHCR, donor communities and other international organizations for their unreserved support and contributions to improve the lives of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Ethiopia despite the shortage of budget and other resources.
Finally, let me take this opportunity to reiterate that the government of Ethiopian will remain engaged with the UNHCR and other stakeholders to jointly work to address the plight of refugees and displaced persons in the country.

I Thank You!