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## DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

### MEDIA ADVISORY

#### **8th High Level Dialogue on the African Union Theme of the Year 2019.**

**What:** Opening Session of the 8th High Level Dialogue on the African Union (AU) Theme of the Year 2019.

**When:** 4<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

**Time:** 0930 Hours

**Where:** Munyonyo Speke Resort, Kampala, Uganda.

**Who:** The Dialogue is convened by the Department of Political Affairs of AU Commission through the African Governance Architecture (AGA) Secretariat. The Opening session will be addressed by AU Commission, Uganda's Senior Government officials, Representative of the Champion on the theme of the Year 2019, UNHCR among other senior representatives.

**Why:** The opening session will offer great insights on the 2019 AU theme, of "the Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa". Discussions at the Dialogue shall place emphasis on international, continental, regional and national normative, policy and institutional frameworks for forced displacement. Particular focus shall be given to the OAU Refugee Convention and Kampala Convention, as well as the CAP on Humanitarian Effectiveness, some of the key continental frameworks for the protection and assistance of refugees, IDPs and returnees. Africa is commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries of the adoption of the OAU Refugee Convention and Kampala Convention respectively.

#### **Background**

Africa is home to at over 25.2 million forcibly displaced persons, made up of 7.4 million refugees and 17.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The continental also hosts 484,000 asylum seekers and some 712,000 stateless persons. Forced displacement has continued to plague Africa over the years, largely trigger by intra-state conflicts, including inter-communal and ethnic violence, persecution as well as natural disasters. Although forced displacement is a global

challenge, political uncertainties, incidents of human trafficking, refoulement, mixed migratory patterns, forced recruitment into terrorist networks and violent extremism, securitization of refugee/IDP camps, sexual and gender-based violence, erratic weather, floods and drought, among other issues continue to exacerbate displacements in Africa.

In Africa, forced displacement of people dates back to the period of the liberation struggles. In order to have a common approach to dealing with the consequences of forced displacement, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on 10 September 1969 adopted the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention). The Convention came into force on 20 June 1974, propelled by the large number of Africans who were forced to flee from conflicts resulting from the liberation struggle and the plight of refugees on the continent. In 2009, Forty years after the adoption of the OAU Refugee Convention, the commitment of the now AU Member States towards addressing forced displacements was once more evident through the adoption of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Other instruments that have included the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted in 1981; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted in 1990; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa adopted in 2003; the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa adopted in 2004; and the African Charter in Democracy, Elections and Governance adopted in 2007. These instruments provide a protective regime of the rights and fundamental freedoms of displaced persons.

Despite commendable efforts to address and manage forced displacement in Africa, displaced persons continue to experience abuse, exploitation and violations. Large number of displaced persons remain in need of humanitarian assistance, finding themselves in protracted situations where solutions have become illusory. Although increasingly displaced persons are hosted in communities and located in organized environment, the particular situation of women and children remain dire and access to key services considerably limited.

In recognition of these challenges and the prevailing need to recognize links between displacement, peace and security and its development dimension, the AU Heads of State and Government at their 31st Ordinary Session held in Nouakchott, Mauritania in July 2018 adopted a decision declaring 2019 as "The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa". The year coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the OAU Refugee Convention and the 10th anniversary of the Kampala Convention. Under the championship of H.E Theodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of Equatorial Guinea theme places emphasis on the implementation of durable solutions to forced displacement in Africa with particular focus on refugees, IDPs and returnees.

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