

AFRICAN UNION

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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

## Press Release

### Message of the AU Commission on the occasion of the World Refugee Day

We are commemorating the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Refugee Day at a time when Africa is facing the challenge of hosting around 18.8 million forcibly displaced persons. The number of displaced persons on the continent is rapidly growing as some countries continue to face the challenge of conflicts and insecurity. The total number of displaced and stateless persons in Africa has drastically increased from 10.2 to approximately 18 million between 2011 and 2016 and will continue to increase in 2017 due to persistent conflicts and insecurity in South Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and effects of Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad region affecting Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger.

The majority of displaced populations are women and children who face the greatest risk of violence, exploitation, harassment and even human trafficking. In particular, children carry the additional burden of separation from their families, abuse, neglect and forced conscription to armed forces and terrorist groups.

With the forced displacement of people, we continue to witness the increasing number of migration flows, mostly of Africans attempting dangerous and deadly journeys across the Sahara desert, the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Aden to Europe. This is because of the increasingly restrictive border control measures in regions of origin, transit and

destination, many falling prey to criminal networks with trafficking along the main migratory routes, and abuse of human rights.

The solution to forced displacement lies within our countries by addressing the root causes, such as conflicts, instability and governance deficits. We need to invest in human resources and develop our economies to drive the continental vision of Agenda 2063. In the meantime, the international community needs to step up its support to countries that are hosting large numbers of refugees in Africa, some of which are in a protracted situation for very long time.

On this 43<sup>rd</sup> World Refugee Day, let us recall our common humanity, celebrate tolerance and diversity and continue to open our hearts and doors to displaced populations across the continent.

We take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to those countries that have opened their doors to accept refugees. Particular gratitude goes to Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda for hosting the highest number of refugees. We all need our concerted efforts to find sustainable solutions to their plight.

**H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat**  
**Chairperson of the African Union Commission**