Consultative Meeting With Independent Experts on the Operationalisation of African Humanitarian Agency Opens

Johannesburg, April 11th, 2019: A Two-day consultative meeting on the operationalization of an African Humanitarian Agency (AfHA) has commenced in Johannesburg, South Africa, with independent experts to discuss and review the proposed study conducted by a consultant hired by the Department of Political Affairs.

The proposed AfHA was endorsed by the Assembly of the African Union which also adopted the Common African Position in January 2016 which is aimed at achieving effective humanitarian action by 2025.

Declaring the meeting open on behalf of the Director of Political Affairs, Dr Khabele Matlosa, the Head of Humanitarian Division, Mr Olabisi Dare, said the meeting was organized as part of the tasks that would eventually culminate in a major milestone for African Union in 2019 when the AfHA is expected to be operationalized to attend to humanitarian challenges being faced by the continent.

Mr Dare said meeting is taking place when Cyclone Idai has left unprecedented devastating impact in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The Cyclone a new
phenomenon in the region was the worst in the Southern hemisphere and African continent.

He said the experts are invited to input and deliberate on the preliminary finding of a study conducted the consultant, reflection the role of the AfHA in strengthening AU’s coordination and leadership role in dealing with forced displacement and humanitarian crises on the continent, make proposals on the appropriate institutional architecture, linkages, financing, legal enablers and functions of the Agency.

Mr Dare also said the experts are to recommend a roadmap for immediate operationalization of the Agency at continental, regional and national levels.

In his remarks, Mr Cosmas Chanda, UNHCR Representative to the African Union Commission commended the AU for taking the initiative that will address the issue of forced displacements in Africa as captured by the 1969 OAU, and the 2009 Kampala conventions.

Mr Chanda as humanitarian challenges continue in scope, UNHCR will continue to support the AU to realize its vision for effective humanitarian action.

He called for collaborative efforts in handling future occurrence of disasters through preparedness and training.

The Two-day consultative meeting will be followed by meetings of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AU Member States that are expected to review and input on the consolidated report.

Year 2019, is declared by the Assembly of African Heads of State as “The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”.

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