



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### Government of Rwanda, UNHCR, and African Union agree to evacuate refugees and asylum seekers in Libya



**Addis Ababa, 10 September 2019** - The Government of Rwanda, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the African Union have today signed a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a transit mechanism for evacuating refugees and asylum seekers out of Libya.

Under the agreement, the Government of Rwanda will receive and provide protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as others identified as particularly vulnerable and at-risk, who are currently being held in detention centres in Libya. They will be transferred to safety in Rwanda on a voluntary basis.

Under this agreement, a first group of 500 persons in need of international protection will be evacuated. The group is principally made up of people originating from the Horn of Africa and includes children and youth at risk. After their arrival, UNHCR will continue to pursue solutions for the evacuees. While some may benefit from resettlement to third countries, others will be helped to return to countries where asylum had previously been granted, or to return to their home countries if it is safe to do so. Some may be given permission to remain in Rwanda subject to agreement by the competent authorities.

Evacuation flights are expected to begin in the coming weeks, and will be carried out in co-operation with Rwandan and Libyan authorities. The African Union will provide

assistance with evacuations, mobilise resources, and provide strategic political support with training and coordination. UNHCR will provide protection services and necessary humanitarian assistance including food, water, accommodation, education and healthcare.

UNHCR urges the international community to contribute resources to the implementation of the agreement.

UNHCR has evacuated more than 4,400 persons of concern out of Libya to other countries since 2017, including 2,900 through the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger and 425 to European countries through the Emergency Transit Centre in Romania.

However, some 4,700 persons of concern are currently estimated to be held in dire conditions inside detention centres in Libya. They urgently need to be moved to safety and to be provided with protection, lifesaving assistance, and durable solutions.

*End*

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