

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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African Union Commemorates World Refugee Day

The African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) commemorated the World Refugee Day, under the theme “*Hope away from Home: A World where Refugees are always Included*” at the African Union Commission Headquarters on 20th June 2023.

In his remarks, Professor Julio Rakotonirina, Director for Health and Humanitarian Affairs, AUC noted that Refugee inclusion is a key component of achieving protection and solution outcomes, as it enhances the resilience of refugees and enables them to contribute productively to their host economies and prepares them for their future whether it being their home country, integration in their country of asylum or in a third country. While acclaiming African Union member states for keeping their borders open for refugees and promoting refugee inclusion, he noted with concern the heavy burden carried by Africa, and called on the International Community to increase their support to Refugee Hosting Countries as part of burden sharing in order to alleviate the constraints faced by the continent.

Dr Buti Kale, UNCHR Representative to the African Union stated that Refugee Rights are Human Rights and upholding them would promote effective refugee inclusion and underscored the value of humane treatment and humanity – **encapsulated in the spirit of Ubuntu** - as central to inclusion. He called on the African Union, RECs and AU member states to support inclusion by considering making **Pan-African** pledges on refugee inclusion at the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, on 13 – 15 December 2023 in Geneva. In commending the African Union for enacting progressive legal and policy documents, he called on the Commission to enhance promotion of their ratification, domestication and implementation, and also called on the RECs and member states to implement these **normative** and policy **frameworks**.

H.E. Ambassador Mahlaba Almon Mamba, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Eswatini to the African Union and Chair of the PRC Sub-committee of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) lauded the commemoration of World Refugee Day, underscored member states’ commitment to continue hosting refugees, and the need for a collaborative and coordinated efforts and approach to refugee management. In the spirit of Ubuntu, he called for the humane treatment of refugees the world over, and looked forward to the expeditious operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency which will play a critical and leading role in the management of refugee affairs, he added.

The commemoration day panel discussion featured the following officials who contributed to the discussion with the objective of creating a better world where refugees are included in everything, a world where no one is left behind: Professor Julio Rakotonirina; Director for Health and Humanitarian Affairs, Dr Buti Kale; UNCHR Representative to the African Union, H.E Parfait Onanga-Anyanga; Special Representative of the UNSG to the African Union and Head of United Nations Office to the African Union, H.E. Pietro Mona; Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the African Union, and Mr. Ganzamungu Zihindula; Refugee Representative, who spoke on Delivering on Africa’s goal for inclusion of refugees in national systems of member states; Towards greater socio-economic inclusion for refugees in Africa; UNOAU contribution towards more inclusive refugee policies; Partnerships in supporting refugee inclusion efforts by host countries in Africa as part of burden sharing; Refugee perspective on refugee inclusion into national systems and plans, and challenges faced by refugees in efforts to be accepted and included in host countries, respectively.

Following the informative panel discussion was a very interactive plenary discussion, questions and answers session from the participants and the panel. The Senior Legal Officer; Mildred Ouma summarized and shared the outcome of the discussion in its entirety. A comprehensive meeting report and way forward will be compiled and shared soon.

The meeting was attended by staff from the African Union Commission, AU member states, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, International Organization for Migration, International partners and members of the diplomatic corps.

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