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**SPEECH OF**

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. AISHA L. ABDULLAHI,  
COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS,  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**FOR**

**WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KAMPALA CONVENTION**

**18 – 19 JULY 2013, LUSAKA ZAMBIA**

**Honorable Minister, Office of the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia;**

**The Permanent Secretary and National Coordinator for Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit, Office of the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia**

**Honorable Members of Parliament present in this room,**

**Distinguished Government Representatives of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the Kingdom of Swaziland;**

**Representatives of different Partner organizations including the United Nations System**

**Distinguished Members of Civil Society;**

**Representatives of the Media**

**Ladies and gentlemen;**

Let me begin by expressing my deep gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic of Zambia for the warm welcome and the hospitality extended to the African Union Delegation representing me in this meeting, since their arrival in this beautiful city of Lusaka whose rich history and lifestyle makes it a privileged destination in Africa.

Allow me also to thank all participants for honoring our invitation. Your presence here is no doubt a sign of your commitment to the plight of internally displaced persons and your respect for their rights as citizens of your respective countries. We are aware of your busy schedules and are grateful for making this meeting a priority. I know that your contributions and interventions will enrich our deliberations and help to significantly advance the noble undertaking in which we are all engaged in.

The Purpose of this meeting is primarily to reflect on the ways and means to implement the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, usually known as the "Kampala Convention" that was adopted in Kampala, Uganda in 2009, and entered into force on 6 December 2012. This meeting should also allow us to assess progress and challenges faced by Member States in the process of the domestication of the Kampala Convention into national law.

Let me highlight that this regional workshop in Lusaka is not the first of its kind. This year, the African Union Commission has held similar meetings in West and central regions, and more are planned for East and North African Regions. These workshops are part of efforts to popularize and implement the Kampala Convention, and have already generated great enthusiasm among decision makers, experts and humanitarian actors.

Dear participants,

African values such as justice are based on the respect for and the protection of human rights. Protection should be accompanied by a concern for social justice as well as attention to the most vulnerable members of society. Internally displaced persons are among the most vulnerable members of our societies. Therefore, the place given to the internally displaced persons in our law and in our international obligations is a good indicator of our commitment to the creation of a fair and safe society for all.

Indeed, although in recent years there has been a reduction in the number of conflicts on the continent, Africa continues to top the list for the number of victims of forced displacement with more than 10 million IDPs and more than 5 million refugees. The intensification of some conflicts, especially in countries like Somalia, Mali, DRC and Central African Republic have contributed to the increased insecurity that always results in the loss of thousands of lives, massive destruction of infrastructure and the disruption of social services, as well as the flight of thousands of people within or outside their countries.

The Kampala Convention is therefore a milestone in the development of African and international legal instruments on forced displacement and offers a real opportunity to develop innovative and comprehensive solutions to the issue of internal displacement on the continent. Although only of African jurisdiction, the adoption of the first international legal instrument on the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons has been welcomed by the entire international community as an attempt to assert the importance of the shared values and as a significant contribution to the body of international humanitarian law. If this instrument is to significantly advance international law and open new horizons for the victims of forced displacement in Africa, there must be effective implementation by Member States to ensure its real impact on the lives of these victims.

Ladies, gentlemen

Dear participants,

The Convention stipulates that the responsibility for the prevention, reduction and durable solutions to internal displacement is the primary responsibility of the State. It should also be noted that the Convention spells out the obligations of all stakeholders, including the African Union, international organizations and humanitarian actors as well as members of the armed forces, throughout the process of displacement. The African Union has developed a model law for states that have ratified the Convention to be able to encourage them to implement this international standard into domestic law.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to encourage us to make every effort to showcase to the world one of our long standing African value of generosity and the resolve to address the plight of victims of forced displacement in Africa as we did as early as 1969, when we adopted the Convention on Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa is still alive today.

I also wish to thank the government of the Republic of Zambia for their continued demonstrated commitment and leadership in dealing with displacements in this region as well as thank all the countries of the region for their resolve to dealing with this issue effectively; while not forgetting the United Nations; the international organizations; and the civil society organizations operating in this region, for their strong support and partnership.

I wish you all successful deliberations, and thank you for your kind attention.