

**DECLARATION ON THE AFRICAN UNION THEME OF THE YEAR 2019:
“THE YEAR OF REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED
PERSONS: TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO FORCED
DISPLACEMENT IN AFRICA”**

WE, the Heads of States and Governments of the African Union meeting at the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly from 10 to 11 February 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to launch the Theme of the Year 2019: ***‘The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa’***;

MINDFUL that there are deeper structural and multi-layered factors that continue to trigger forced displacement, including socio-cultural and politico-economic challenges, that result in underdevelopment, inequality, poverty, including disparity between women and men, sexual and gender-based violence, intolerance and mismanagement of diversity, bad governance, mismanagement of natural resources, corruption and conflicts;

CONCERNED about the scale and complexities of forced displacement and protracted humanitarian situations that continue to ravage countries and communities across the continent owing to, inter alia, civil strife and violent conflicts, human rights violations, persecution, governance deficits, impunity, natural disasters and calamities, effects of drought and climate change, terrorism and violent extremism resulting in 6.3 million refugees and asylum seekers and 14.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs);

REAFFIRMING that the Theme of the Year 2019, on refugees, returnees and IDPs, presents an auspicious historical moment as it brings to fore the Africa’s continued exemplary level of shared solidarity towards displaced populations, in the spirit of Pan-Africanism, at a time when displaced persons are faced with discrimination and xenophobia in many parts of the world;

COMMITTED to striving towards realisation of the noble goals of ‘Agenda 2063 - The Africa We Want’ by addressing the structural root causes of forced displacement and by implementing durable solutions to humanitarian crises and forced displacement in Africa;

RECOGNIZING that year 2019 marks the **50th Anniversary** of the adoption of the **1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention)** as well as the **10th anniversary** of the adoption of the **2009 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)**, key instruments for Member States to prevent displacement, respond to the material and protection needs of the displaced populations and find solutions to humanitarian crises situations;

NOW HEREBY DECLARE:

A) On the 50th Anniversary of the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and 10th Anniversary of the Kampala Convention:

1. **CALL ON** all Member States to sign, ratify, domesticate and implement the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the AU Convention on Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and other relevant policy frameworks dealing with forced displacement and associated humanitarian crises including the Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness;
2. **REQUEST** Member States, the Commission, humanitarian and development partners to mobilize resources for implementation of the instruments and to strengthen structures for monitoring compliance and accountability;
3. **UNDERTAKE** to mark the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention as well as the 10th anniversary of the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) in 2019 in partnership with key national, regional, continental and international partners including the United Nations System.

B) On Addressing the Root Causes:

4. **RECOMMIT** to address the structural root causes of protracted violent conflicts, terrorism and violent extremism, natural disasters and calamities, climate change, governance deficit, diversity mismanagement, human rights abuses and other factors have led to a large number of forced displacement;
5. **ENSURE** that efforts are made to guarantee sustainable peace and security, democracy and socio-economic development pursuant to the noble goals of Agenda 2063 towards silencing guns and ending all wars in Africa by the year 2020;
6. **URGE** Member States to prevent forced displacement through better understanding of the drivers of displacement and develop plans and policies that implement early and broad-based political actions and strategic responses that deal with the multi-faceted and context-specific root causes for displacements in Africa;
7. **REQUEST** the Commission to work with Member States, the Regional Economic Communities, international humanitarian and development partners to support Member States in implementing the prevention agenda of the African Union as stipulated in Agenda 2063, the African Governance Architecture (AGA), the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), as well as the AU's strong legal

and policy frameworks governing human rights, situations of forced displacement and attendant humanitarian crises in Africa.

C) On Finding Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement:

8. **RECOGNIZE** that protracted displacement require concerted, holistic and multi-layered strategy for their durable solution involving Member States, RECs, humanitarian and development partners at national, regional, continental and global levels and, therefore, **REQUEST** the Commission to enhance greater partnerships to address protracted displacement situations;
9. **COGNIZANT** of the reality that conflicts pose a political challenge to the continent resulting in displacement and humanitarian crisis and aware that such challenges fundamentally require a political solution anchored on political commitments that enhance peace and security, democracy and governance, as well as socio-economic development and structural transformation of our continent;
10. **COMMIT** to take bold and effective political leadership to resolve conflicts in Africa through adopting policies and strategies that strengthen national systems and structures that prevent conflict and displacement on the continent;
11. **SUPPORT** efforts towards the creation of condition conducive to return, rehabilitation and reintegration as part of durable solutions to forced displacement;
12. **UNDERLINE** the importance of preventive measures towards durable solutions to forced displacement through early warning, early response, early recovery, disaster risk reduction measures, timely humanitarian action, compliance with human rights and humanitarian law and greater participation of the affected population, including host communities, paying particular attention to women, children, young people, people with disabilities and the elderly;
13. **ESTABLISH** the link between displacement and peace and security as a fundamental basis for dealing with durable solutions and **CALL ON** Member States and all development partners to ensure that the link between displacements and good governance, as well as displacement and the development dimensions, are also fully recognized and addressed and to this end, **CALL ON** the Member States and the development partners to engage in 'a whole of the society approach';

D) On Statelessness:

14. **EXPRESS CONCERN** that the continent hosts 712,000 stateless persons that lack any form of legal protection and are often more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violations, with their displacement lasting sometimes for several

decades without solutions and **COMMIT** to develop a clear policy framework to address this challenge;

15. **REQUEST** the Commission to work with Member States to develop policies that can assist Member States to better manage and solve the problem of statelessness in Africa.

E) On Natural Disasters and Climate Change:


16. **RECOGNIZE** that natural disasters and climate change can exacerbate existing violent conflict, threaten access to vital resources and disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and result in displacement;
17. **CALL ON** Member States to strengthen measures to address the effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, particularly in conflict-affected areas;
18. **REQUEST** the Commission to support Member States to draw from examples of good practices across the continent and identify resources, mechanisms and forward-looking strategies, backed by national, regional, continental and global political commitments to prevent and mitigate the negative impact and consequences of such trends.

F) On Education:

19. **PERTURBED** that an estimated 12.6 million children living in conflict zones are out of school in Africa because displacement denies children of their right to access quality education; displaced refugee children are 5 times more likely to be out of school than children not displaced and girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in conflict-affected countries, and young women are nearly 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict;
20. **REQUEST** the Commission to work with Member States and relevant partners to ensure access to education for refugee children, returnee children, IDP children and stateless children in Africa;
21. **REQUEST** the AU Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) to spearhead the development of a mechanism for regular reporting on the situation of girls and women's education in Member States, taking into account their teaching and learning environments, the safety and security of schools and the education systems and the extent to which refugees are mainstreamed into local education systems;
22. **REQUEST** AU/CIEFFA to work, with relevant partners, to develop national gender sensitive comprehensive policies and operational plans that integrate

peace, education and protection of girls and young women in the education programmes for the displaced populations in Africa;

G) On Gender Mainstreaming and Youth Empowerment:

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23. **RECOGNIZE** that responding better to displaced people's protection and assistance requires a comprehensive understanding of the gender and age differentiated impact on forced displacement and **REQUEST** the Commission to improve its data management to ensure gender and age disaggregated reporting;
24. **CALL ON** Member States and concerned parties to ensure that the participation of women and youth in peace processes and capacity building through disaster risk management are enhanced;
25. **URGES** Member States, the Commission and partners, to ensure a holistic approach to humanitarian actions through social inclusion and sustainable development with a focus on refugee youth, children and women.

H) On Humanitarian Financing:

26. **RECOGNIZE** that against the backdrop of rhetoric on global solidarity and burden-sharing, several national programs remain substantially underfunded, leaving displaced persons and host communities with little resources to rely on and **COMMEND** Member States that continue to host refugees, IDPs and stateless persons for their solidarity and hospitality in the spirit of Pan-Africanism;
27. **REQUEST** Member States and the international community to revitalize and implement global responsibility-sharing mechanisms to find durable solutions to forced displacement;
28. **REQUEST** the Commission, RECs and development partners to support Member States to better respond to situations before crisis or conflict break out and **IMPLORE** humanitarian and development partners to avail resources necessary in addressing the challenges of forced displacement on the continent;

I) On Global Partnership and Cooperation:

29. **COMMEND** Africa's impressive tradition of protecting the forcibly displaced through fostering regional peace and stability and by taking steps to contribute towards a global public good, through complementing the global framework of international refugee and human rights law, through the development of strong complementary continental refugee, IDP and human rights normative frameworks to address forced displacement;

30. **REITERATE** that the generosity of AU Member States needs to be supported by concerted international action and **REQUEST** Member States to revitalize and implement global responsibility-sharing and partnership mechanisms that address root causes and explore durable solutions to forced displacement;
31. **CALL FOR** the transformation of the international humanitarian system to make it more responsive, effective and fit for purposes;

J) On African Humanitarian Agency:

32. **RESTATE** Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.604(XXVI), adopted at the 26th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2016, that calls for the establishment of an African Humanitarian Agency as a vehicle for streamlining humanitarian action on the continent;
33. **REQUEST** the Commission, in collaboration with Member States, RECs and relevant AU Organs and Institutions, to expedite the operationalization of the African Humanitarian Agency.

K) On the Theme of the Year 2019:

34. **WELCOME** the plans of the Commission on a range of activities to be implemented in relation to the Theme of the Year 2019 'The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Person: Towards Durable Solution to Forced Displacement in Africa', in line with the Assembly Decision AU/Dec.707(XXXI);
35. **ADOPT** the Concept Note that outlines the planned activities for the Theme of the Year 2019;
36. **APPOINT** H.E. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, as the AU Leader for the Theme of the Year 2019 and **REQUEST** him to steer the planned activities for the Theme of the Year, and report on the implementation of this Decision during the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly in February 2020.