



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



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### **HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF MINISTRIES IN CHARGE OF REFUGEES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION 5-7 MARCH 2019, Speke Resort Munyonyo, Uganda**

#### **Statement by Hon. Hilary Onek, Minister of Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees**

DRAFT

Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Uganda,  
Hon. Ministers in charge of Refugees from the Great Lakes Region,  
The UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes Region,  
The representative of the UNHCR High Commissioner,  
The Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes  
Region,  
Special Representative of the African Union,  
Development Partners present  
Representatives of UN Agencies,  
Distinguished team of Experts

I am honoured to welcome you to this High-Level meeting of Ministers in Charge of Refugees in the Great Lakes Region. You will recall that at the 9<sup>th</sup> High-Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in October 2018 in Kampala, the Heads of

State and Government agreed to convening a regional ministerial level consultation to discuss concrete steps to find durable solutions to protracted displacement in the Great Lakes region under the chair of H.E. the President of Uganda.

We are here today to continue to explore mechanisms of providing durable solutions to refugees in the Great Lakes region, who are in protracted situations, a situation that continues challenging us.

The Great Lakes Region has an estimated 4.4 million refugees and asylum seekers and Uganda alone has about 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers who are in displaced situations arising out of armed conflict, war, inequitable access to resources and discriminatory access to services. This population require support in terms of humanitarian and development needs in addition to providing for host community needs.

Indeed, we all know too well that the increasing scale, complexity and protracted nature of forced displacement in the Great Lakes Region is creating challenges for host communities and tensions over access to livelihoods and basic services. Tensions between displaced population and host communities over limited resources and a lack of social cohesion can potentially lead to further conflict and new cycles of displacement.

An effective response necessitates support in host countries and communities, and increased investment in addressing and analysing root causes of forced displacement in countries of origin. Experience has shown the need for comprehensive development approaches that go beyond immediate, humanitarian support.

It is in this spirit that the International Community in December 2018 adopted the **Global Compact on Refugees**. The Compact aims to ease pressure on host countries through responsibility- and burden-sharing, enhance self-reliance and expand durable solutions.

The Refugee Compact includes the traditional durable solutions to refugee situations – support for countries of origin and voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration – and introduces **two new and distinct solutions** (paragraph 100 in the Global Compact on Refugees), namely complementary pathways for admission to third countries and other local solutions. The latter speaks to economic, social and cultural inclusion of refugees.

Advancing 'other local solutions', Uganda has included refugees into the National Development Plan II and – under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) – we have developed socio economic integration plans benefitting host communities and refugees and creating a win-win situation focused on local development, self-reliance and resilience. Indeed, sector plans which include refugees into our national Education Strategic Sector Plan and the Health Sector Development Plan are in place. The work to make local solutions more viable will continue with two additional priority areas identified by Uganda's CRRF Steering Group: Water and Environment and Jobs and Livelihoods. These are significant steps towards durable solutions in terms of 'other local solutions' for refugees in Uganda as these efforts lay the foundation for further refugee inclusion into the next National Development Plan.

The expert meeting which has been here for the last two days has extensively discussed the various options of providing durable solutions to refugees which in my view include voluntary repatriation, re-location and local integration.

Voluntary returns remain the most viable alternative and this would require firm commitment of not only member States but the international community to commit to providing conducive and sustainable solutions for voluntary return. As we pursue a regional approach to providing durable solutions to people in forced displacement, I need to emphasize the following:

1. Need for a clear and common definition of local integration
2. Firm commitment by the international community to step up their responsibility sharing obligation through increased slots for third country re-locations and simplified relocation procedures; and to fund response plans to provide for both refugees and host communities.

Uganda as a country, we re-iterate our continued commitment to keep our borders open and receive refugees as a matter of compassion and to provide them with an array of rights to ensure their dignified stay until they feel safe to return to their countries of origin. We have embraced the CRRF approach and we call for full support from all stakeholders to make it lead to meaningful changes in the lives of refugees and host communities.

I wish you a good stay and enjoyment of this beautiful country.

For God and My Country.