



Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic
to the United Nations Office
and other International Organizations
at Geneva

65th Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
High-level segment on "Enhancing international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities
and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa"
Statement by the Czech Republic
30-10-2014

Mr. Chairperson, Honoured High Commissioner, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the High Commissioner and the key-note speakers for highlighting the refugee situation in Africa and the challenges ahead of us.

The Czech Republic is a new member of the Executive Committee but an old partner of the UNHCR in response to humanitarian emergencies around the globe.

When speaking about international cooperation, solidarity, local capacities and humanitarian action for refugees in Africa, we are having in mind millions of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in several African regions. The humanitarian assessments talk about millions of vulnerable human beings, deprived of their basic needs for months, years or even decades.

In recent years, we have been mostly concerned about the comprehensive refugee problems in Somalia, South Sudan or Central African Republic, all of them caused by internal conflicts as well as climate related emergencies. The Czech Republic has been involved in the international efforts in favour of both - the displaced inhabitants of these countries and the hosting local communities in their neighbourhood.

We therefore commend African countries – such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Chad - for their generosity and solidarity in relation to the large numbers of refugees they are hosting. Furthermore, we would like to express our appreciation to UNHCR for assisting these countries and for providing support to vulnerable refugees and displaced persons as well as to vulnerable local host communities. The issues of protection, advocacy and life-saving assistance are in multiple ways addressed in the UNHCR humanitarian projects.

Humanitarian access to people in need is still not provided by all parties to conflicts in Africa. The consequence of this obstruction is deprivation of life-saving assistance for thousands of vulnerable persons, mostly children, women, old and handicapped persons. Sexual and

gender based violence is another danger that the refugees and internally displaced persons often face, without access to health related, psycho-social and legal assistance.

The Czech Republic is concerned about these issues and has included them into its policies and humanitarian activities. We have supported victims of sexual and gender based violence in a comprehensive effort from basic health assistance through reintegration into local communities to legal assistance and public awareness-raising.

In this context, we appreciate the entry into force of the first ever African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. We hope that this so called Kampala Convention will contribute to creation of more secure legal conditions for the IDPs and refugees alike.

The Czech Republic, together with its partners, including the EU, UNHCR and the affected countries in Africa, is also focused on finding sustainable solutions and reducing structural vulnerabilities in the new and old IDP and refugee situations. This task is much more complex than the humanitarian mandate; however, it is still a part of the humanitarian policy as well.

We are supporting education in safe schools for IDP and refugee children, we are involved in livelihood programmes for refugees and returnees, combined with similar support for host communities and focused on environmentally sustainable activities. In the broader policy framework, we support the capacity building for local, national and regional authorities.

We really appreciate the efforts of UNHCR in searching after long-term sustainable solutions for refugees and IDPs through voluntary returns or relocation programmes. We are aware of the need for greater political will and solidarity of third countries with the refugee countries in Africa. We are equally aware of the gaps between fast track humanitarian activities and long term development efforts in relation to the management of risks and challenges caused by the forced migration. Last but not least, we are fully aware of the root causes of the refugee crises in Africa, which can only be successfully addressed through comprehensive political processes combined with comprehensive movement of solidarity by the international community.

As for the Czech Republic, I can promise that we will continue our financial support for the UNHCR programmes and operations in Africa. We are ready to intensify our cooperation on the design and implementation of projects focused on sustainable solutions in the affected countries and regions.

I thank you.