

REMARKS BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY STATE DEPARTMENT FOR
IMMIGRATION AND CITIZEN SERVICES, AMB. PROF. JULIUS K. BITOK,
MBS, DURING THE WORLD REFUGEE DAY COMMEMORATIONS ON
19TH JUNE 2023 IN KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP.

The High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi,

WFP Country Representative,

UNHCR Country Representative, Caroline Van Buren

UNHABITAT Representative

UNHCR Regional Bureau Director for East and Horn of Africa and the
Great Lakes

Under Secretary and Executive Director, United Nations Settlements
programme

Governor H.E Jeremiah Napotikan of Turkana County

Ambassador, Switzerland Embassy

Member of Parliament, Turkana West

Commissioner for Refugee Affairs

The County Commissioner, Turkana County

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Heads of Agencies present,

Members of the County Assembly,

Refugees and asylum seekers and members of the host community,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you to the World Refugee Day here is Kakuma Camp
in Turkana County. This is indeed a historical day that has the presence and
honour of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi. I am
humbled to make these remarks as the Chief Guest on this day that is marked

globally to highlight matters affecting the management of refugees and asylum seekers in the world.

Today, on World Refugee Day 2023, we gather here to mark this day by reflecting upon the successes and challenges faced by millions of individuals around the world who have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in foreign lands. As I address you on this significant occasion I wish to shed light on the commitment of our government to provide support and protection to refugees.

Kenya has put in place relevant legal and policy framework to better manage the refugee issues through the Department of Refugee Affairs. The Refugee Act No. 10 of 2021 and the Regulations that are at last phase of development are quite progressive on protection, documentation and providing access to services for the refugees in the country. Indeed, Kenya has been very active on global and regional forums on management of refugees where it has ratified the UN Convention of 1951, the AU protocols on Refugee problems in Africa, Regional Declarations including the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education, Nairobi Declaration, Kampala Declaration on jobs and livelihoods and the Mobasa Declaration on refugee health and recently the Munyonyo Declaration on Durable solutions for Refugees.

Kenya has been generously hosting refugees and asylum seekers for decades. Currently over **600,000** refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from neighbouring countries, and vast majority of them are hosted in Turkana and Garissa and approximately 94,000 in Urban Areas.

Refugees represent the very essence of resilience, hope, and the universal desire for a better future. They have been uprooted from their homes due to unimaginable circumstances, be it conflict, persecution, or the devastating consequences of climate change. As we acknowledge their struggles, and this year's theme- **hope away from home**, we must also recognize the strength they embody and the potential they bring to our societies as we support them.

Our nation, stands proud in its commitment to upholding the principles of humanity and compassion. We believe that every individual, irrespective of their nationality, race, or religion, has the right to seek safety and protection. Today, we reaffirm our unwavering dedication to supporting refugees and ensuring their dignified existence within our borders.

To address the challenges faced by refugees, we have witnessed the collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Interior and National Administration, international organizations, NGOs, and local communities. Together, we have implemented comprehensive policies and programs to ensure the safety, well-being, and successful integration of refugees into our society. The Kalobeyei Integrated Development Settlement Approach (KISEDPA) has so far benefited both refugees and host community members through access to basic services and empowerment programs. We look forward to upscaling this program. This also applies to GISEDPA which is set to be implemented in Garissa County.

Going forward, the Government is working on the **Shirika Plan** which will build on KISEDPA, GISEDPA and existing frameworks towards sustainable durable solutions for Refugees. One of our top priorities in this plan is the transformation of refugee camps into integrated settlements and provision of adequate shelter, healthcare, and education to refugees.

Through the collective efforts of agencies and organizations present here today, we have established dedicated facilities and centres that offer housing, medical assistance, and educational opportunities. By providing access to quality education, we empower young refugees with the knowledge and skills necessary to rebuild their lives and contribute to the development of our nation. The government through the state Department for Urban Planning is also working on upgrading Kakuma and Dadaab to a Municipality. This will enhance service delivery to both refugees and the host community.

Furthermore, as we welcome refugees into our communities, we must emphasize the importance of abiding by our laws and fostering mutual respect. Let us remind ourselves and the refugees present here that engagement in contraband business, illicit brew activities, or any other criminal behaviour is not acceptable. We expect all refugees to uphold our laws and contribute positively to our society. By doing so, we can foster a harmonious coexistence between the host communities and the refugees, ensuring the well-being and safety of all.

Additionally, our engagement in international efforts to address the root causes of displacement, including conflicts and the impact of climate change, remains unwavering. High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, and esteemed diplomats, we renew our commitment to finding lasting solutions and promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in regions affected by violence, persecution, and environmental challenges.

However, let us not forget that the responsibility to protect and support refugees does not solely rest with governments. It is a shared global responsibility that demands collective action. As a host Government, we have faced tremendous challenges including inadequate financial resources, insecurity linked to refugee camps, environmental degradation, influx of onward movers just to mention but a few.

I wish to commend and thank the people of Kenya, specifically Turkana and Garissa Counties who have donated their land for over **30 years** now to host refugees. This is indeed the true spirit of Ubuntu. It is because of this that we emphasize on the need to equally support the host community so that no one is left behind.

On this World Refugee Day, I call upon the international community, civil society organizations, private sector and individuals to join hands with us in our efforts to provide a better life for refugees. Together, we can create a world where the fundamental rights of every human being are respected, regardless of their circumstances.

Let us also reaffirm our commitment to the principles of compassion, empathy, and solidarity. Let us recognize the immense challenges faced by refugees and stand united in our pursuit of a world where no one is forced to leave their home due to conflict, persecution, or the devastating effects of climate change. Together, we can make a difference and build a future where refugees find hope, dignity, and a new beginning.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Filippo Grandi, for gracing us with his presence today and for the Work UNHCR and other agencies are doing in support of Refugees.

I also want to express my appreciation to the Governor of Turkana County, the Members of Parliament, Members of County Assembly and the People of Turkana County for hosting refugees and for the continued support provided.

Lastly, I want to extend a special acknowledgment to the refugees present here today. Your courage, resilience, and strength in the face of adversity are truly remarkable. We recognize the challenges you have overcome and the contributions you continue to make to our society.

In conclusion, as we commemorate the World Refugee Day 2023, let us stand together, refugees and host communities alike, united in our pursuit of a world where compassion and empathy prevail over prejudice and discrimination. Let us work hand in hand, guided by the principles of justice and humanity, to create a future where every individual, regardless of their background or

circumstance, can find safety, security, and a place to call home. Let us make this a home for all of us.

Thank you, and may this World Refugee Day inspire us all to strive for a better world.

AMB. (PROF.) JULIUS K. BITOK, MBS

PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

19TH JUNE 2023