

For Immediate Release:



Joint NGO Statement: IGAD Heads of State Special Summit on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees

(Nairobi, March 24, 2017): The membership of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), Somalia NGO Consortium and the Inter-agency Working Group (IAWG) welcome the Special Summit of the IGAD Heads of State on Durable Solutions for Somali refugees taking place on the 25th March, 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya. This Summit and its expected Comprehensive Plan of Action is convened at a time when almost one million Somalis refugees are displaced within the East and Horn of Africa region.

“It is commendable that IGAD’s Heads of State are demonstrating commitment to durable solutions for Somali refugees,” says Heather Amstutz, Co-Chair of the IAWG Steering Committee.

The Summit presents a unique opportunity for the Heads of States to provide political leadership and commitment towards unlocking the protracted nature of the Somali displacement in the region. Majority of the almost a million Somali refugees have been displaced for decades with very little prospects of finding durable solutions.

“A radical shift towards solutions for protracted displacement is urgently required, one that goes beyond ‘care and maintenance’ to one that preserves dignity by nurturing self-reliance and resilience of Somali refugees, while addressing the impact on host communities,” says Aude Galli, Coordinator of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS).

NGOs hope that the Heads of States will take practical steps towards the development and implementation of a comprehensive regional approach. It is hoped that such an approach, developed in the spirit of the New York Declaration, will support countries and communities that host Somali refugees in improving asylum space, integrated access to services, inclusive economic opportunities and infrastructure for all.

NGOs call on the international community to provide adequate long-term and predictable international political and financial support to this initiative, with the involvement of development actors from the start to ensure a regional shift towards a development response that helps refugees become more self-reliant. In that regard, it is critical to support host countries to include displacement in their National Development Plans to complement humanitarian interventions, addressing displacement affected communities’ needs and contributing to a comprehensive effort.

The vast majority of Somali refugees have been hosted in neighbouring countries for decades. This Summit provides a unique opportunity to call on the international community to demonstrate solidarity with IGAD member states through responsibility sharing and increased resettlement quotas for Somali refugees.

Furthermore, the Summit is convened at a time when the East and Horn of Africa region is facing a severe drought which has already precipitated a famine in parts of South Sudan and threatens to do the same in Somalia.

“The threat of famine in Somalia is real, and we hope that Heads of States will commit themselves to averting it. Pre-famine conditions mean a massive displacement crisis is in the making with influx of refugees and IDPs on top of an already dire situation with over a million internally displaced and almost a million refugees.” says Abdurahman Sharif, Director of the Somalia NGO Consortium. “If we don’t collectively act now, the consequences can be catastrophic not only for Somalia but also for the region.” Over 260,000 Somalis have already been internally displaced since the end of 2016 due to the pre-famine situation.

In order for Somalia to receive adequate international support, NGOs call for International Financial Institutions to cancel Somalia’s debts to support and accelerate development within Somalia and to mitigate the long-term effects of the current pre-famine situation.

NGOs are concerned that the population movement is happening within a backdrop of continuing returns of Somalis from Kenya and suspension of registration of new arrivals. NGOs urge IGAD Member States, especially the Governments of Kenya, Somalia and UNHCR to suspend the return process given the impending humanitarian crisis and the adverse consequences that sustained repatriation may create and urge the Government of Kenya to resume registration of new arrivals.

This is a regional and cross-border issue which requires better population movement monitoring within and outside Somalia to better prepare and respond as well as to ensure protection of affected populations.

While finding solutions to the Somali protracted crisis is critical, NGOs collectively call on the IGAD Heads of State to convene, as a matter of urgency, a similar initiative on the South Sudanese refugee crisis. At the moment, over 1.6 million South Sudanese are displaced in the region with more than 810,000 hosted in Uganda alone. Uganda has welcomed more refugees in the last months of 2016 than the total number of refugees arriving in Europe last year.

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