



SPECIAL SUMMIT ON REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA



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MEMBER STATES SIGN AU CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Convention is a “unique comprehensive and unequivocal response to the challenges of forced displacement”

Kampala, Uganda 23 October 2009 – The African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government gathered in Kampala, Uganda since October 22 for the AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and IDP’s in Africa have adopted and signed the first ever Convention for the protection and assistance of IDP’s. The AU Convention was signed in Kampala today by 5 AU Heads of State, 5 Vice Presidents and Prime Ministers as well as by Foreign Ministers and other Heads of Delegations who attended the historic event. In total, 17 countries signed the convention. They also adopted the Kampala Solemn Declaration for a stronger commitment towards addressing the challenge of mass displacement.

The AU Convention will be the first legal framework in the world and will promote and strengthen regional and national measures to prevent or mitigate, prohibit and eliminate root causes of internal displacement as well as provide for durable solutions. The Convention includes general obligations for State Parties, international organizations and humanitarian agencies; and the African Union. For the State Parties, once the Convention is domesticated, they shall respect several obligations relating to protection and assistance of internally displaced persons and avoid situations driving to forced displacement.

Africa wants to provide more protection and assistance to IDP’s, those living like refugees in their own country. Through this Convention African leaders will commit themselves to more responsibility.

President Museveni urged the remaining AU Member States to sign the convention and called on those who have already signed, to ratify it. In his closing remarks, President Museveni said he was pleased that the summit had anchored the solutions to the challenges of forced displacement to development and social transformation in Africa.

In her closing statement, Mrs. Julia Dolly Joiner, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs commended the Assembly for its tireless efforts to address forced displacement. She recalled that “the Convention that has been adopted, the first of its kind by any regional group or organization in the world, is a unique, comprehensive and unequivocal response to the challenges of forced displacement”. She added that “this instrument clearly demonstrates that African

leaders are conscious of the difficulties that internally displaced persons experience and are poised to, as much as possible, put an end to their suffering". Nevertheless, Commissioner Joiner recollected that "the most important part of this process lies ultimately in implementation". That would be the "most visible demonstration that Member states are prepared to move beyond intention and rhetoric into visible action".

The Convention shall be open to signature, ratification or accession by Member States of the AU in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures. It shall enter into force thirty (30) days after the deposit of the instruments of ratification or accession by fifteen (15) Member States.

African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and the Kampala Declaration on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa attached.