

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON

REFUGEE OPERATIONS IN ZAMBIA

BY

THE HON. MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, MR KAMPYONGO, MP

Madam Speaker, I would like to start by thanking you and the Leader of Government Business, Her Honour the Vice-President for affording me this opportunity to render a ministerial statement to update the House, and through this House, the nation at large, on the status and situation regarding the refugees we host in this country. I am grateful because today, the rest of the world is commemorating the World Refugees Day.

Madam Speaker, Zambia continues to maintain an open door asylum policy in line with its international obligations while ensuring that internal security is maintained. The country is currently hosting a total number of 80,700 refugees and former refugees and asylum seekers from the neighbouring country and beyond half of whom are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The number of refugees from the DRC has continued to increase despite the successful holding of general elections and the peaceful transfer of power in the DRC. The refugees, most of whom are arriving through Luapula and Northern provinces, are claiming violence due to tribal and militia conflicts in the Kivu, upper Katanga and Tanganyika regions.

Madam, following the enactment of the Refugees Act No. 1 of 2017 by this august House, the ministry has embarked on programmes that are centered on taking care of the needs of refugees and former refugees as well as host communities in order for them not to only survive, but to also thrive. This is exemplified by the establishment of Mantapala Refugee Settlement where more than 15,000 Congolese refugees are settled among the population of over 5,000 inhabitants sharing the social amenities and other facilities put in place in the area from the beginning of the influx in august 2017.

Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to once again extend the Government profound gratitude to the people of Luapula, North Western and Northern provinces especially those in the border areas who have been at the front line of receiving asylum seekers and assisting them. Traditional leaders, local authorities and host communities in areas where refugees settlement are located also need to be commended for their resilience in continuing to receive refugees and sharing their land and resources.

The development of Mantapala Refugee Settlement was also made possible with the support the gallant men and women of the Zambia National Service (ZNS) who have been on the ground to open up the area by constructing roads and bridges. In addition, the Government has been assisted in this endeavour by the United Nations (UN) agencies led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations and local organisations. Further, the work would not have been possible without the efforts of partner ministries including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare, Ministry of General Education and the provincial administration. However, a lot remains to be done to consolidate the response and provide adequate services to the refugees and their host communities.

Madam, there is, for instance, urgent need to complete the works that have been started on the promotion of livelihood among refugees, the construction of schools, health centres, police posts including the supply of safe water and sanitation. The humanitarian and development needs of the two populations need a wholesome approach to us to leverage on the establishment of the settlement in order to bring development to the people of Nchelenge and Kawambwa in line with the government's intention for the refugee programmes to also benefit the host communities.

Madam Speaker, it will be recalled that in September, 2016, His Excellency President Edgar Chagwa Lungu was one of the world leaders invited by the then, President of the United States fo America (USA), Mr Barrack Obama to the Leader's Summit on Refugees in New York, which was held concurrently with the UN General Assembly where the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants was adopted. Annex 1 of the Declaration sets out a comprehensive refugees response framework for responding to large movements of refugees including