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Topic: Aiding Refugees and Displaced People

Sponsor: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The world is witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. An unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution at the end of 2018. Among them are nearly 30 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. More than 900,000 refugees and asylum-seekers living inside the country, Ethiopia is home to the second largest refugee population in Africa. Education, employment opportunities, and access to water are three major challenges refugees in Ethiopia face today. In some areas, refugees walk all day to reach clean water. Women and girls, who are often tasked with necessary duties, are at an increased risk of sexual- and gender-based violence as they walk alone for many hours. Nearly 60 percent of the refugee population is under 18. With 105 million people in 2017 and an estimated 109 million in 2019, Ethiopia is also one of the most highly populated countries in Africa, second behind Nigeria. In the western world, Ethiopia is often viewed as emblematic of poverty and a hotbed for intrusive predicaments infesting the world.

With more than 900,000 refugees and asylum-seekers inhabiting the country, Ethiopia is home to the second largest refugee population in Africa. Ethiopia hosted refugees mainly from neighboring countries, making it the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. More than 99 percent of them originate from four countries: South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. Most of the refugees are housed in 26 different camps, all with limited services and opportunities, and depend largely on humanitarian assistance. In September 2016, the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants in New York aimed to find comprehensive solutions for refugees and migrants. Ethiopia was one of the most progressive countries in pledging that they would do more to enhance local integration of refugees. They made nine pledges following the main principle of making it easier for refugees in the country to live outside of camps. Local integration provides the chance for refugees to live a dignified life while building a better future. On January 17, 2019, Ethiopia passed a new law that allows refugees to obtain work permits and other legal documents. Refugees can now work legally, formally register births, and marriages and access financial services such as bank accounts. These historic changes will help refugees integrate fully into and contribute to their local communities. Ethiopia's parliament adopted a revised refugee law on January 17, 2019, which the United Nations (UN) has hailed as one of the most progressive refugee laws on the continent. It replaces the country's 2004 Refugee Proclamation and grants the country's massive refugee population access to local integration, a wide range of services and improved

socio-economic integration. The Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), under the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS), is the primary government agency responsible for the management of refugees and returnees. The agency works in tandem with international bodies, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which was involved in drafting the new refugee law. The 2004 Ethiopian Refugee Law focused on protection of refugees, while the revised law aims to offer durable solutions, particularly with regard to local integration. The anchor instruments of the new law remain the 1951 UN Refugees Convention and the 1961 OAU Refugee Convention. However, it has also added new legislative intentions such as ‘comprehensive legal framework’ and ‘international standards that contain rights and entitlements’. It introduces various mechanisms for achieving durable solutions and facilitative measures towards local integration. The most far-reaching provision is Article 25, which could be termed as the local integration provision or the containment provision. Article 25 imposes many obligations on Ethiopian authorities regarding asylum seekers or refugees that are selected to engage in Ethiopian government projects funded by the EU and potentially other donors. For example, NISS is obliged to issue renewable five-year resident permits to refugees selected to such ‘projects’ under Article 25. Ethiopia has driven an encampment policy for many years, and now the Government estimates that in 10 years’ time there shall be an elimination of refugee camps in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia’s pledges are linked to livelihood, education and civil documentation. Education is a top United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) priority in Ethiopia because nearly 60 percent of the refugee population is under the age of 18. UNHCR has partnered with local organizations to help enroll more refugee children in primary school. These efforts have been successful and in regions like Jijiga, where 85 percent of all primary-school aged refugee children are now enrolled in school. UNHCR continues to expand educational opportunities for refugees, provide specialized training for teachers, encourage girls to stay in school and improve access to university and vocational training for older students. In addition to a large refugee population Ethiopia manages more than 1.5 million internally displaced people (IDPs). Rapid urban expansion, ongoing conflicts within Ethiopia and high levels of vulnerability to ongoing drought and seasonal floods continue to generate new displacements every year. Some have fled because of drought. They are mainly pastoralists and from very mobile communities. When their animals die, they lose their livelihood and have to seek assistance to survive. It’s a different kind of displacement, because it is a mobile population who stops moving because they cannot continue with their way of life. A multitude have been displaced due to unrest along the border between the Oromia and Somali regions. Economically qualified and stable member countries of the international community maintain impervious responsibility and influence over aiding Ethiopia and its refugees. Specific governments have to see what efforts they can do on many different levels. They should be involved in trying to find political solution to these conflicts, which eventually will allow for return, including providing clean water and sanitation, shelter, education, food security and livelihoods. Some refugees will need to be resettled to third countries, especially in cases with unaccompanied children who have families in other countries. Those countries need to facilitate so that these children can be reunited with their families. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), has most notably, significantly, and relevantly addressed

the needs and found solutions for displaced communities, and as Ethiopia hosts a large refugee population, and a large population of internally displaced people. The NRC is working closely with the government to determine where they can intensify and reinforce an added value in assisting refugees and contributing to durable and reliable solutions. It is vital for Ethiopia and prospering countries to develop blossoming and effective relationships in order to continue yielding emergency relief in refugee receiving areas, such as the camps in Ethiopia

Highly liberal in approach and substantive in content, Ethiopia and its revised refugee laws are lauded as “models for other refugee hosting nations around the world.” But what does this country’s enlightened future entail and what is behind this significant policy change? The revised refugee law introduces the following seven substantive changes: 1. Its primary focus is on durable solutions through local integration of refugees. 2. It expands the ground for asylum protection. 3. It takes a more liberal approach to the asylum application process. 4. It grants the most favorable treatment to refugees in terms of access to services. 5. Refugees will enjoy employment and property rights. 6. Asylum seekers and refugees have the right to recognition to their certificates of education, training, and skills. 7. It grants freedom of movement to refugees, ending the encampment policy. Ethiopia has become a pioneer in progressive norm setting for refugee protection, assistance, and provision of durable solutions. Now it is time for implementation. While promulgating a new proclamation is easier and can be done by the Ethiopian government alone, implementation of such generous and flexible law requires solidarity at a global level. Like an entrepreneur real estate developer obtaining land, preparing it for development, and managing the construction process, Ethiopia welcomes refugees and elicits benevolence to their cause, yet desires to aggressively prioritize and tackle the crisis productively.

Works Cited

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