



**Speech Delivered
By**

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Rt. Hon. Prime Minister

At

The Opening of the Extra – Ordinary Session of

The AU Executive Council

At 10.00am

At

Munyonyo

19th October 2009

- The Chairperson, AU Executive Council
- Hon. Ministers
- Hon. Members of Parliament
- Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corp
- Delegates
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Ladies and Gentlemen

I take this opportunity to welcome all of you to Uganda. I wish to thank the African Union for choosing Uganda to host this Extra Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council and the Summit aimed at searching for durable solutions to the root causes of forced displacement of persons in Africa.

Your Excellencies, as you are aware, many African States have and some continue to experience forced population displacement. During the period leading to and immediately after Independence, African Countries worked together to address the then humanitarian challenges resulting from the wars of liberation and the struggle against apartheid as well as the efforts to build modern nation states from a diversity of ethnically-based nations.

The need to jointly work together was at that time strongly inspired by the pan-African spirit that mobilized the Continent's leaders and eventually led to the establishment of the OAU in 1963. That collective expression of solidarity and determination by the newly

independent states also led to the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspects of Refugee problems in Africa.

More than half a century after the independence of the majority of African Countries and for almost a decade into the new millennium, the Continent is still home to the largest number of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the world, numbering 17 million.

Tragically, a large number of them have been in protected camp situations spanning several years and in some cases for decades.

For example, Uganda has hosted Refugees since the Second World War. In 1945 Uganda received and hosted 4,600 Polish Refugees who were repatriated in 1946. The first lot of Rwandese refugees who numbered 98,000 at the peak of their forced displacement came to Uganda in 1959 and lived here for 50 years, most of them returned after the genocide beginning in 1994. From 1968 to-date, Uganda has hosted refugees from Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea and lately Kenya.

The potential of otherwise willing and able people to contribute to the development of their communities and Nations is being wasted. Keeping such a large number of people in confinement also has serious consequences of peace and stability.

Unlike the years of the struggle against colonialism, the majority of people in Africa today become displaced due to completely different reasons including adverse forces of nature, such as earthquakes, and drought and violations of human rights, political and economic marginalization, and conflicts over natural resources and governance challenges.

The inability to effectively protect, assist and find timely resolutions to the problems that created these displacement situations is posing a major threat to Africa's development.

Since the past two decades the majority of the forcibly displaced in Africa are IDPs. In some cases, these IDPs were once returned refugees and were displaced internally when they could not effectively reintegrate when in their areas of return.

In the year 2002, at the peak of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) Insurgency in Northern Uganda, more than 2.5 million people were internally displaced. The Government of Uganda developed and began implementing the National Policy for Internally displaced Persons.

The policy gives guidelines on how to manage cases of internal displacement and how to return and resettle the IDPs. I am happy to inform you that Uganda after defeating the LRA has successfully

resettled 2.1 million IDPs, the remaining 413,000 IDPs are gradually returning home on a voluntary basis.

The Government of Uganda has now embarked on reconstruction and re-development of the areas that hosted the IDPs through the National Peace, Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP).

Under this programme the Government is rebuilding social and economic infrastructure of the returnee IDPs and former Refugees such as schools, health centres, roads and providing income generating opportunities.

Your Excellencies, I am happy to note that through this special Summit Africa is once again taking a ground-breaking initiative to address the IDP and Refugees situation.

During the past several years the AU and its Partners in the United Nations have resolved many conflicts creating the possibility for many refugees and IDPs situations to be successfully resolved with the populations affected going back home.

There is need to redouble efforts towards making conditions at places of IDPs' return conducive and attractive as Uganda has done through the development of the IDP policy, Refugees Act 2006 and the Peace, Recovery and Development Framework for the Northern parts of the Country

I am very optimistic this Special Summit will come out with strategies for addressing the root causes of forced displacement, strengthen protection and assistance to the Africans IDPs and Refugees.

Once again, I welcome you to Uganda, the Pearl of Africa.

Thank you.

Professor Apolo Nsibambi

Rt Hon Prime Minister

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