



Press Statement

For Immediate Release

PRESIDENT LUNGU APPEALS TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OVER REFUGEES INFLUX

NCHELENGE, (Tuesday, 31st October 2017) -- **His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia**, has appealed to the international community to scale up interventions to help prevent the escalating refugee influx into northern Zambia from degenerating into a humanitarian crisis.

"The refugee crisis from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been worsening since September 2017 and we fear this could lead to a major humanitarian crisis on both sides of the border. We therefore call for increased support from all humanitarian actors," President Lungu said after touring the Kenani refugee transit centre in Nchelenge district bordering the DRC.

Since September 2017, the number of confirmed refugees at the transit centre now stands at 5,884 following the escalation of violence in some parts of the DRC. In view of the deteriorating political and security situation in the DRC, the UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva has declared a Level Three Emergency in the Democratic Republic of Congo (the highest possible crisis alert calling all humanitarian actors to preparation and action against an imminent humanitarian crisis.) The focus is that more refugees are expected to flee the DRC into neighbouring countries including Zambia.

"This situation will require more preparedness by the Government of Zambia, UNHCR, other UN Agencies and Cooperating Partners to receive and assist the new arrivals."

On a daily basis, between 50 and 100 asylum seekers are entering Zambia fleeing from widespread violence due to the volatile political and security situation in some parts of DRC, especially in the eastern parts of the country bordering Zambia's Luapula Province. The Zambian government has stepped up security in the area to protect both the refugees and Zambian villages affected by the insecurity in the border areas.

Other than Nchelenge and Chiengi borders, DRC refugees have been entering Zambia in small numbers through boarder points in Nsumbu, Kaputa and Mpulungu district in Northern Province, Kasumbalesa and Sakaya boarder points on the Copperbelt, as well as Kipushi and Kakoma in North-Western Province bringing the total number of refugees from DRC to over 9,000 as of today.

"The President has established that unless immediate and greater interventions by stakeholders are made the refugee crisis could quickly degenerate into a major humanitarian crisis."

The Zambian government is working closely with aid agencies under the leadership of the UNHCR to provide asylum seekers with security, basic necessities such as food, shelter and medicines among others. The President has mobilized an assortment of drugs from private sources to beef up Nchelenge district health officials' response to any possible disease outbreak.

The President has emphasised that the international community must do more to forestall an imminent humanitarian crisis in the border areas where the refugee crisis is concentrated. To effectively respond to the current emergency, urgent support is needed to provide life saving assistance including food, wash, public health and core-relief items to new arrivals at the transit centre and new settlement. As we move to the new sight, a number of critical requirements have to be put in place.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Coordinator Ms. Janet Rogan, UNHCR Country Representative to Zambia Ms. Pierrine Aylara, Ministers of Home Affairs and Health Steven KAMPYONGO and Dr. Chitalu CHILUFYA respectively accompanied the President on the tour of the refugee transit centres.

Issued by:

AMOS CHANDA
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
(PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS)
STATE HOUSE