



**Remarks at the High-Level Meeting of Ministers in charge of Refugees in the  
Great Lakes Region**

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**7 March 2019, Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala**

His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda

H.E. Said Djinnit, UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region

H.E. Basile Ikouebe, Special Representative of the African Union Chairperson, and Head of the AU Liaison Office for the Great Lakes Region

H.E. Zachary Muburi-Muita, Executive Secretary, ICGLR

Ministers present

UN Colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you to the Pearl of Africa. Uganda is a peace and development innovation hub. It's a nation with a clear roadmap informing its development aspirations outlined in National Vision 2040 and a nation that has demonstrated its willingness to ensure that it leaves no one behind as it leverages its natural resources to achieve sustainable development and sustain peace.

African States have a long tradition of hospitality towards refugees and have developed legal frameworks governing aspects of refugee protection. Uganda's rich cultural heritage grounds her approaches to development including the refugee response which is based on empathy, solidarity and brotherhood. This is what we call Obuntubulamu. The concept of Obuntubulamu has proven much easier to understand and explain than to define. Drawing on its linguistic origins from the Southern African Nguni word "Ubuntu", the concept denotes humanity towards others. Across the different cultures in Uganda, it manifests as a set of an almost endless number of values centered on respect, dignity and solidarity.

Your Excellency,

Today we sit in the same space where Africa adopted nearly one decade ago, the Kampala Convention on Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees, which remains the only convention of its kind by a regional grouping in the world. So far, 40 member states have ratified and 27 have deposited the convention. The Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees, which was also held here, was the first summit of its kind to be held in the global south in the same country for which support was being mobilised. The summit helped to raise the profile of the refugee response in Uganda from a forgotten situation to a globally recognized best practice informed by a robust national narrative which States and businesses wanted to invest in.

Uganda has a long history of providing a safe haven in an unstable region, while dealing with its own development challenges and increasing vulnerabilities. The generosity and investments of the Ugandan Government and people in maintaining an open-door, transformative policy, is unique and commendable, particularly at a time when the asylum space is shrinking in many countries around the world. Thank you Uganda! Uganda's National Development Plan includes a Settlement Transformative Agenda that informs the comprehensive approach to refugee management in the country. At present, 12 districts in vulnerable regions are demonstrating the courage and strain that comes from hosting those fleeing violence. These districts have great investment potential.

Before I conclude, I would like to commend the Government of Uganda for being the first country in the world to formulate integrated sector response plans for refugees and host communities for the education and health sectors. We need to urgently mobilize financing to increase investments in social services and wealth creation for host communities and refugees informed by these plans.

On behalf of the United Nations in Uganda, I would like to express our gratitude to the leaders and people of the 12 districts hosting refugees. At a time of challenges including drought and climate related effects resulting in food insecurity, we cannot underestimate the importance of the hospitality of the people and the bold steps taken by the leaders of 12 districts with the Central Government, the United Nations and other partners to respond to the impacts of the refugees' influx. I reiterate our commitment to continue to advocate for support and investment in Uganda.

Your Excellency,

Allow me to conclude with a special vote of thanks to the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region H.E. Said Djinnit for his leadership and service. This is his last event in his current capacity and I wish to convey the thanks on behalf of the UN family for his efforts and wish him all the best in his new endeavors. Uganda is the current president of the Regional Oversight Mechanism so it is appropriate that the Special Envoy bid us farewell from here.

Thank you for your attention