



PRESS STATEMENT

UN System in Uganda extremely concerned over allegations of fraud in refugee response; welcomes Government's action to investigate all allegations

Kampala, 12 February 2018 – The United Nations System in Uganda welcomes the swift action taken by the Government of Uganda to investigate allegations in the refugee response. The allegations include gross mismanagement, malpractices in the registration of refugees, fraud, corruption, trafficking of girls and women, and threats to UN staff.

The allegations are of extreme concern to the UN as they go against the principles and values enshrined in the UN Charter. They were uncovered through the UN's periodic reviews of the refugee response operation as well as hotlines for whistleblowers.

Our deep concern about the allegations led us to take action. The UN System in Uganda brought these concerns to the attention of the Prime Minister. We called for investigations into the allegations by the Government. In addition, we raised these concerns with our respective headquarters.

Through the investigations, we are committed to collaborating with Government, to ensure due process is followed. We are committed to ensuring that anyone found culpable is brought to justice. The UN has no space for corruption, fraud, trafficking of women and girls or as the intimidation of UN staff.

The UN has a shared commitment with development partners to transparency and accountability. We have communicated to partners the internal administrative and oversight measures being put in place to get to the bottom of the allegations.

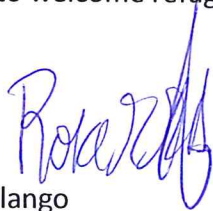
As part of its measures, in 2017, the UN in Uganda prioritized strengthening of systems for reporting and responding to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, not only among its personnel, but also among its partner organizations and communities served by the UN, including refugee communities, particularly refugee women and girls. The system seeks to commit all UN staff and partners to a strict Code of Conduct with clear accountability mechanisms and timely grievance handling procedures.

Minimum standards proposed by donors were incorporated into the UN's internal measures adopted by National Partnerships Forum in February. Additionally, the UN has renewed its resolve to ensure all its staff have completed mandatory training, including on zero tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The UN will ensure the involvement of key stakeholders including refugees and Ugandan nationals at all planning levels as part of accountability and transparency mechanisms.

At the request of the Government, with immediate effect, the globally acclaimed UNHCR biometric system will be used to verify the refugee population. The UNHCR system ensures that a refugee cannot be registered twice as it captures a wide range of features including 10 fingerprints and two iris scans. It is a proven and reliable tool used in 48 countries.

Uganda hosts the largest refugee caseload in Africa, and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework implemented by the Government of Uganda remains a best practice globally.

Since these allegations were brought to the attention of the Government, it has maintained an open-door policy, allowing the exchange of information on emerging risks and possible mitigation measures. We thank the Government and the people of Uganda for opening up their country to welcome refugees.



Rosa Malango
UN Resident Coordinator
UNDP Resident Representative