



## **THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA – AFRICAN UNION – UNHCR**

### **A Joint Press Release**

#### **The Government of Rwanda, the African Union, and UNHCR agreed to continue the evacuation of refugees and asylum seekers from Libya**

The Government of Rwanda, the African Union and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency on 14 October 2021 signed the First Addendum and extension to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated 10 September 2019 between the Republic of Rwanda, the African Union, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees establishing an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) from the State of Libya to the Republic of Rwanda.

This addendum takes effect immediately and will ensure that the established ETM in Gashora, Rwanda continues until 31 December 2023, and increases its capacity from the initial 500 to 700 persons at any one time.

Under this agreement, the Government of Rwanda will continue to receive and provide protection to refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as others identified as particularly vulnerable and at-risk, who are currently being held in detention centres in Libya. They will be transferred to safety in Rwanda on a voluntary basis. After their arrival, UNHCR will continue to pursue durable solutions for the evacuees. While some may benefit from resettlement to third countries, others will be helped to return to countries where asylum had previously been granted, or to return to their home countries if it is safe to do so. Some may be given permission to remain in Rwanda subject to agreement by the competent authorities.

Evacuation flights are expected to resume and will be carried out in co-operation with Rwandan and Libyan authorities. The African Union will continue to provide assistance with evacuations, mobilise resources, and provide strategic political support with training and coordination. UNHCR will provide protection services and necessary humanitarian assistance including food, water, accommodation, education, and healthcare.

Rwanda has received a total of 648 refugees and asylum seekers so far, who arrived in six evacuation flights from Libya to the ETM since its establishment in September 2019. UNHCR and the Ministry in charge of Emergency Management (MINEMA) will continue to conduct individual registration of all the individuals and issue Proof of Registration (POR) documents that allow them to travel in the country and access assistance provided in the centre. The registration activities are followed by individual case processing for solutions, including Refugee Status Determination (RSD), Best Interest Determinations (BIDs) for children with specific needs, including unaccompanied and separated children and resettlement interviews. Currently, the ETM in Rwanda hosts 281 refugees and asylum seekers from eight African countries, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon.

However, some 1,680 Persons of Concern (POCs) are currently inside detention centres across Libya. They urgently need to be moved to safety and to be provided with protection, lifesaving assistance, and durable solutions. The AU and UNHCR urge the international community to continue contributing resources towards the implementation of the agreement and assist POCs in these detention centres, and called on other Member States to emulate Rwanda's example.

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