



Press Statement

20 June 2011

“A bundle of belongings isn’t the only thing that a refugee brings to our country” 20th June – World Refugee Day.

JOHANNESBURG – 20th June is World Refugee Day. Its aim is to highlight issues around refugees but also to celebrate the tenacity and spirit of refugees and how they contribute to their host society.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees on its website states that the global figure is approximately 16 million refugees across the world at the end of 2010. South Africa hosts only 58 000 of these refugees. Refugees are a special category of migrants who flee war or persecution in their home country. They are unable to receive protection in their home country and often their governments are the agents of persecution,

“Many South Africans think that we have an overwhelming amount of refugees in South Africa but if you look at the international refugee population this is not true. We host only 58 000 refugees and in terms of international burden sharing this number is minimal. Poor countries such as Zambia hosts a similar number of refugees to South Africa and Kenya and Tanzania each host on average 275 000 refugees,” said Sicel’mpilo Shange- Buthane the Executive Director of the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA). “Just as South Africans fled during apartheid and received refugee status elsewhere in the world it is our duty to provide protection to refugees who are fleeing persecution in their home countries at this time” Shange-Buthane stated further.

Shange-Buthane stated that: “A bundle of belongings isn’t the only thing a refugee brings to the host country. Albert Einstein, Miriam Makeba and Martina Navratilova were all refugees. All of these people contributed significantly to their host country and developed their potential while being refugees. All that they needed was a bit of humanity and the ability to integrate properly in their host society for them to flourish. Refugees need very little help from the government, all they need is for the government to provide what it is duty-bound to do – effective administrative justice systems and clear and valid documentation and most refugees will be able to manage on their own

without making further claims on government. But without enabling documentation or effective asylum systems refugees face significant barriers to realising their potential to contribute to our society". The challenges that refugees and other migrants experience have been well documented in the recently published 2010 CoRMSA Report.

CoRMSA calls upon citizens to open their hearts and to help our refugee population where it can to integrate in our communities, remembering a time in our recent past when we sought hospitality from our neighbours when our political leaders were in exile and also calls for refugees to uphold the same values.

CoRMSA also calls upon the DHA to provide clear and effective asylum processes and effective documentation to refugees so that they can concentrate on building hope and realising their potential in their host country instead of being drowned in the administrative bureaucracy. **For more information please contact:**

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