

ECDC Conference Observes UNHCR's 60th Anniversary

With participation by key leaders of the nation's refugee resettlement program, ECDC's 17th national conference on African refugees and immigrants in Arlington, Va., May 2-4 observed the 60th anniversary



UNHCR's António Guterres

sary of passage of the U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Appearing at an annual awards banquet featuring special recognition of Ethiopia and Tanzania for their traditions of hospitality and welcome to displaced populations, Guterres noted that continued violence in many African nations, combined with the ravages of drought, hunger and poverty has increased pressure on asylum countries.

He praised ECDC for being "in the front line of efforts to explore new solutions and strengthen services to those in need."

"An often overlooked dimension of displacement is the contribution of neighboring countries that border countries in conflict," Guterres told journalists in an earlier address at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

"These countries are often themselves poor, volatile and at risk of further instability. They are in need of international assistance to help support refugee and displaced populations."

The award to "the government and

people of Ethiopia" cited that country's recent adoption of an out-of-camp policy that allows Eritrean refugees to live outside of refugee camps in any part of the country.

The Tanzanian award applauded that nation's leadership in providing sanctuary and repatriation for the "1972 Burundian refugees" long warehoused in crowded camps and the granting of citizenship to those who chose to remain in Tanzania.

Ambassador Tesfaye Yilma, Deputy Head of Mission of the Ethiopian Embassy, said his nation's commitment to refugees represents more than a mere fulfillment of obligations under treaties with the United Nations and the African Union. It also flows from the traumatic outpouring of its own people to neighboring countries to escape abuses by a military dictatorship just two decades ago.

Out of such experiences, the Ambassador said, came Ethiopia's long-standing commitment that when people in the region who share so much in common are forced to go through difficult and perilous

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Amid Celebrations of New South Sudan Nation, Tensions Remain Unresolved

As thousands of Southern Sudanese danced in the streets of Juba on July 9, celebrating the birth of their new nation of South Sudan, President Obama and other world leaders voiced their support for its hard-won independence, tempered with caution about the difficult tasks awaiting those assuming nation-building responsibilities after decades of civil war in what had been Africa's largest country.

Even though Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir participated in the celebratory events and announced that his nation would be the first to recognize the new state, tensions remain over several issues. The precise border lines between the two states, the handling of oil revenues and the ongoing insurgencies in the Darfur and Southern Kordofan regions of Sudan.

Announcing America's recognition of the new state on the same day, President

Obama said the event served as a reminder that "after the darkness of war, the light of a new dawn is possible."

"A proud flag flies over Juba and the map of the world has been redrawn," Obama said. "These symbols speak to the blood that has been spilled, the tears that have been shed, the ballots that have been cast, and the hopes that have been realized by so many millions of people.



Celebrants carry new South Sudan flag.

The eyes of the world are on the Republic of South Sudan. And we know that southern Sudanese have claimed their sovereignty, and shown that neither their dignity nor their dream of self-determination can be denied."

Also attending the Juba ceremonies was United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who told reporters that he was confident South Sudan would soon join the global body.

"South Sudan begins life as a state facing enormous challenges. But South Sudan has remarkable potential, with natural resources, huge amounts of arable land and the waters of the White Nile flowing through it," Ban said. Earlier in Khartoum, Ban urged the northern government to allow U.N. peacekeepers to stay beyond the end of their mandate to

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In My Opinion...

Welcoming the New South Sudan

As I observed the jubilant early July celebrations unfolding in the new nation of South Sudan—and in communities of Southern Sudanese in the United States and around the world—my thoughts frequently returned to that group of heroic young boys and girls who epitomized for most of us the awful waste of human and material resources resulting from the three-decade struggle for independence and freedom. They were known as the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan, numbering more than 20,000 when they sought to escape the terror of the civil war by trekking to Ethiopia, then back to Sudan, and then to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. By the time they arrived at the camp, their number had dwindled to about 9,000. Nearly 4,000 were subsequently resettled in the United States.

What prompted my recollections of those events were the fervent hopes expressed in words and drawings by many of the 400 youth who attended two reunions we conducted for them in 2002 and 2003. Their most fervent desire was captured in a poster drawn by Benson Deng. It depicted what he hoped would one day become the official flag of a new South Sudan and these words of hope and gratitude: “Peace, Liberty, Unity, Justice for all is all we want in the New Sudan like our friends American do.”



Tsehaye Teferra, Ph.D.
President, ECDC

All expressed profound gratitude for the opportunities they were experiencing in furthering their education and social and cultural development in the United States, many proclaiming their intentions to return to their homeland when peace came and work to build the new nation. Another poster produced by Josoeph Lueth depicted what may have been an overly-idealized dream many attendees might then have had for their

new country. It showed a group of citizens responding in apparent unity to a plea by a future South Sudan president asking: “What do you want me to do?” Above the scene were the words: “I love American Form of Government: Democracy.”

By now those who attended the reunions will have most likely completed their formal education and begun careers in their diverse fields of interest. How many remain committed to their goal of returning to South Sudan and participating in nation building is unknown. For those who do, however, it is my hope that their education about the American form of government included some study of The Federalist Papers, including the prescient counsel by Alexander Hamilton as he argued for ratification of the American Constitution in 1787. It will have been helpful, too, if they have watched with more than casual attention the unfolding debate in congress over the traditionally non-dramatic issue of raising of the nation’s debt ceiling. Hamilton’s counsel will have warned them about the difficulty of establishing the American form of government. The debt ceiling debate will have illustrated how perilous is passionate partisanship to effective governance, even in a democracy.

“Ambition, avarice, personal animosity, party opposition, and many other motives not more laudable than these, are apt to operate as well upon those who support as those who oppose the right side of a question,” Hamilton wrote. “Were there not even these inducements to moderation, nothing could be more ill-judged than that intolerant spirit which has, at all times, characterized political parties. For in politics, as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution.”

Through painful personal experience, the Lost Boys are already more familiar than most about the futility of persecution in achieving political goals. Even if their observations of the American system have affirmed Winston Churchill’s citation that “democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time,” I trust that they have not abandoned their ambitions.

Larry Bartlett Assumes Directorship of PRM’s Refugee Admissions Post

Larry Bartlett, a specialist in international development and refugee affairs, has assumed the position of Director for the Office of Refugee Admissions at PRM, a program he has managed in an acting capacity in recent months.

Bartlett joined the State Department in 1999 during the Kosovo crisis, serving as a lead refugee officer for Kosovo before becoming Deputy Director for the Asia and Near East Refugee Office. As Deputy Director he had leadership assignments for refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon, for which he received the Department’s prestigious Warren Christopher Award.

Bartlett also served in Iraq in 2003 as Senior Advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Displacement and Migration, helping guide ministry formation and refugee policy formulation. Prior to joining the Department of State, he served as a Peace Corps Country Director in Bulgaria, Jordan and Macedonia. He has six years of experience working with non-governmental organizations in international education and earthquake relief. He served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Yemen Arab Republic, helping the Ministry of Health implement a national immunization campaign.

USCIS Launches Web Page For Performance Results

USCIS has established a new web page that will provide monthly and quarterly updates on performance results for key refugee and immigrant programs.

It will include processing times for Form N-400, Application for Naturalization; performance data for Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status; and statistics on Form I-914, Application for T Nonimmigrant Status, and Form I-918, Petition for U Nonimmigrant Status. Forms I-914(T) and I-918(U) are used for victims of trafficking and victims of crime. Updates to be issued quarterly will report on all form types.

The page is at: www.uscis.gov/data.

ECDC's African Refugee Conference Honors Leaders

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times, Ethiopia's borders would never pose as barriers for those seeking refuge and protection.

Also honored at the banquet was Virginia Congressman Jim Moran, cited for his dedicated public service on behalf of constituents in his district and for his "many contributions toward expanding opportunities for refugee and immigrant



ORR Director Eskinder Negash

South Sudan...

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monitor the situation in Southern Kordofan, the north's biggest remaining oil producing state, and other hotspots.

The U.N. Security Council voted to establish a new mission in South Sudan called UNMISS, with up to 7,000 U.N. peacekeepers and an additional 900 civilian police.

Included among a Presidential Delegation appointed by President Obama to attend the Juba celebrations—led by Susan Rice, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations—were Colin L. Powell, Former Secretary of State and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of African Affairs; and Princeton N. Lyman, United States Special Envoy to Sudan.

newcomers to the United States."

ECDC Communications Consultant Lloyd Wright was recognized for his contributions to ECDC's outreach and public education efforts.

Keynote speaker Eskinder Negash, director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), discussed efforts over the past two years to improve the agency's programs and services, reminding attendees that the resettlement program's basic mission is "to save lives and restore hope and dignity to the displaced."

He described as painful his recent visit to the Dadaab camp in Kenya, reminding him of his own experience as a former refugee from Ethiopia. "Some refugees have been in the camps for more than 20 years," he said.

"I'd like everyone working in refugee

affairs to spend some time in a camp to see first hand the strength it takes to wake up every day with no hope, but summon up hope anyway," he said. Negash has invested more than 30 years of his life in service to refugees.

Plenary and workshop sessions at the conference addressed such topics as the current state of African refugees on the continent and in the U.S.; identification and processing of refugees being admitted to the United States; sustaining ethnic community-based organizations; partnering with federal agencies; and facilitating adjustment and integration.

Attendees visited their congressional representatives one afternoon to discuss legislative issues of special concern to refugees and immigrants.



Accepting awards for leadership and service from ECDC President Tsehaye Teferra are Virginia Congressman Jim Moran, left, and Ambassador Tesfaye Yilma, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Ethiopia in Washington D.C.

Photos by Trug Chi



President Obama Meets With Four African Presidents

As the deadline approached for raising the nation's debt ceiling in late July, President Obama interrupted his participation in negotiations with members of Congress to reaffirm America's support for democratic progress in Africa by meeting with four democratically-elected presidents: President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger, President Boni Yayi of Benin, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, and President Alassane Ouattara of Ivory Coast.

Praising the courage and fortitude that enabled the presidents to arrive at positions of power by the legitimate will of their peoples, Obama issued a cautionary note about future progress.

"Despite the impressive work of all these gentlemen, I've said before and I think they all agree, Africa does not need strong men; Africa needs strong institutions. So we are working with them as partners to build effective judiciaries, strong civil societies, legislatures that are effective and inclusive, making sure that human rights are protected," Obama said.

Obama urged the leaders to assume a major partnership role with other countries and humanitarian organizations in responding to the famine in the Horn of Africa.

NEWS BRIEFS

Famished Somalis Seek Relief in Kenya, Ethiopia

Searching for food, water, shelter and other relief from the drought and famine in their home areas, tens of thousands of Somalis have converged on Mogadishu in recent weeks, with many more arriving at refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia.

Already plagued by conflict, the exodus from south and central Somalia is posing severe strains on humanitarian relief agencies, prompting an urgent public appeal for funds by the UNHCR.

Surveying the situation confronting an estimated 70,000 internally displaced people in Mogadishu in late July, UNHCR staff members got a first-hand view of the desperation, noting that “some of the weakest and most vulnerable people are left with nothing, despite the best efforts of agencies and charities.”

Those arriving in Kenya and Ethiopia are exhausted, severely weakened by hunger and the long walk from Somalia. Between 40 percent and 50 percent of the children are acutely malnourished, UNHCR estimates.

To learn how you can help, visit: www.unhcr.org/emergency/somalia/.

UNHCR Marks 60th Anniversary of Founding

UNHCR offices around the world marked the 60th anniversary of the U.N.

Refugee Convention on Thursday, July 28. Establishing the legal foundation on which most of the agency’s work worldwide is based when it was adopted on July 28, 1951, the landmark convention remains the cornerstone of refugee protection but today faces unprecedented challenges.

“The causes of forced displacement are multiplying,” said U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres. “People are uprooted not just by conflict and persecution, but also by extreme poverty and the impact of climate change. We need protection-sensitive borders so those in fear for their lives or freedom continue to find it. At the same time we need to find innovative ways to fill the increasingly clear gaps in the international protection system and to promote the values of tolerance and inclusion rather than fear and suspicion.”

Naturalization Ceremonies Welcome 24,000 Citizens

As part of 350 naturalization ceremonies conducted by USCIS to commemorate America’s 235th birthday on July 4, more than 24,000 people became new citizens. Eight of the ceremonies conducted between June 27 and July 4 were held specifically for members of the U.S. armed forces, including one aboard the USS Midway in San Diego, Calif., where 200 members of the military were natu-

ralized in a tribute to Gulf War veterans.

“Every Fourth of July, we celebrate our country’s spirit of independence,” said USCIS Director Alejandro Mayorkas. “This spirit, and our founding ideals of freedom and democracy, have allowed us to achieve great success as a nation of immigrants. Immigrants come to America in search of opportunity and, by taking the Oath of Allegiance, embrace the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship.”

Other members of the U.S. armed forces took the Oath of Allegiance at all-military ceremonies in Baghdad, Kabul, and Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

UNHCR’s Global Trends Report Defines Displaced

An estimated 43.7 million people are currently displaced worldwide, according to UNHCR’s 2010 Global Trends report released on World Refugee Day, with four-fifths of the world’s refugees being hosted by developing countries.

Within this total are 15.4 million refugees (10.55 million under UNHCR’s care and 4.82 million registered with the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees), 27.5 million people displaced within their own country by conflict, and nearly 850,000 asylum-seekers, nearly one fifth of them in South Africa alone.

When UNHCR was created 60 years ago, it’s caseload was 2.1 million Europeans, uprooted by World War II.

FY 2011 African Refugee Admissions

As of July 31, 2011 • Ceiling for FY 2011 is 15,000

Country of Origin	Refugees	Country of Origin	Refugees
Angola	2	Ivory Coast	6
Burundi	104	Kenya	1
Central African Republic	100	Liberia	73
Chad	25	Mauritania	3
Congo	24	Nigeria	1
Dem. Rep. Congo	708	Rwanda	52
Eritrea	1,351	Sierra Leone	28
Ethiopia	426	Somalia	2,046
Gabon	2	Sudan	234
Ghana	1	Togo	4
Gambia	6	Uganda	10
Guinea	1	Zimbabwe	8
Guinea-Bissau	4	TOTAL	5,220

Source: U.S. Department of State, PRM

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