

Rwanda Clarifies DRC Position On Cessation Clause
By News Of Rwanda
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Rwanda has dismissed media reports suggesting that DR Congo does not approve of the implementation of the cessation clause which removes refugee status on Rwandan refugees spread across the world.

The DRC North Kivu Governor Julien Paluku told MONUSCO's Radio Okapi yesterday that his government had rejected the Pretoria resolutions at the Ministerial meeting in South Africa on April 18 where Rwanda renewed its desire to have all refugees returning home or remaining in host countries as nationals not refugees.

According to Radio Okapi, the North Kivu Governor said that his country had refused such agreement, because it would automatically turn the Rwandan refugees into Congolese.

Speaking on American broadcaster VOA Tuesday morning, Rwanda's Minister of disaster management and refugee affairs, Ms Seraphine MUKANTABANA said the media reports were wrong and misleading. The minister added that the Radio Okapi report was "shocking" as she had not heard anything like that officially from DRC.

Minister Mukantabana said the DRC official delegation to Pretoria had instead indicated that it would seek the guidance from the Congolese parliament on how to deal with the cessation clause issue. Congo's delegation was led by interior minister, Richard Mueej.

Responding to critics of Rwanda government who have been wondering why the cessation clause program favours only Rwandans who fled the country from 1959 to 1998, the Minister said those are refugees who fled on general cause like genocide while the rest are in exile due to individual problems which could be also attended on individual basis.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR and countries hosting Rwanda refugees agreed in December 2011 that the refugees would no longer be called so after June 31, 2013. Among the options provided was repatriation back to Rwanda and local integration in host countries.

Rwanda also told a UN conference reviewing the status of Rwandan refugees living in different countries that it will provide them with national documents so they cease to be called "refugees".

At the Ministerial meeting in Pretoria (South Africa) on April 18, Rwanda renewed its desire to have all refugees choosing their country. However, considering that most of the refugees have established their lives in host countries, it will not be necessary to return to Rwanda.

"Rwanda's delegation outlined a number of steps it has taken and will continue to implement to support the respective solutions including the issuing of national passports for Rwandans who opt to stay in their current host countries," said UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards at a press briefing on April 19, 2013. In her VOA interview, Minister Mukantabana said there is outstanding cooperation between Rwanda and the DRC as it is with other 12 countries on refugee affairs - arguing that what the North Kivu governor claimed was not known to Rwanda.

"I do not know where, how and who says that DRC refused to cooperate... I know that Congo agreed to work with us and that it would take the issue to the Legislature for review and approval," she said. There have been developments of settling refugee Affairs in Rwanda since 2003, when the national dialogue conference was introduced including Diaspora delegations attending various programs which have been put in place to facilitate Rwandans living outside to remain in constant contact with their country.

This has resulted into the returning of most Rwandans to their country including the recent 12,000 mainly from Democratic Republic of Congo.

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