



**4<sup>TH</sup> OF AUGUST, 2014**

**PRESS STATEMENT FROM HONARABLE EKWE ETHURO, E.B.S. SPEAKER OF THE SENATE ASSEMBLY DURING THE LAUNCH OF AN ANNUAL COURSE ON FORCED MIGRATION**

The Speaker of the Senate Assembly Honourable Ekwe Ethuro, E.B.S. on 4<sup>th</sup> of August launched the 2014 Annual Course on Forced Migration organized by the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) an non-governmental organization established in 1998 to address forced migration issues. He said that the course had come at an opportune time for the region as governments and humanitarian agencies are adapting to the dynamics of people on the move.

He briefly spoke on the role of legislators in enhancing protection space for forced migrants and the importance of this course to the region. He added his personal experience within the forced migration as a Member of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament representing a region in Kenya that has historically been plagued by internal displacement as well as playing host to the Kakuma refugee camp.

“Forced displacement within the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions is now at an all time high. The latest figures indicate that three of the top five- IDP generating countries are in Sub Saharan Africa,” the Senate Speaker said. He added “I take special cognizance that the nations represented here today by the course participants, have over five million persons internally displaced and in most of these states the situation is developing into protracted displacement.” He took note that Kenya had not signed the Kampala Convention while emphasizing the need for durable solutions to internal displacement in the region.

Hon. Ekwe noted the critical role that humanitarian agencies play in advocating with respective governments for the pursuit of durable solutions for displaced persons through the development and enactment of displacement specific national legislation. He added that Kenya has had a long history with internal displacement most notably the internal displacement caused by the post election violence of 2007/2008 following the disputed general elections in which over 1,300 persons were killed and over 600,000 others displaced.

During his tenure as Member of Parliament, he engaged with humanitarian agencies in the lobbying and eventual enactment of the Prevention, Protection and Assistance of IDPs and Affected Communities, 2012. He was the chair of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Resettlement of IDPs which spearheaded the process of development and enactment of the Act.

He said that in the lobbying and policy development process, it is essential that all actors, both state and non-state, stay alive to the country specific situations, particularly the socio-political dynamics within the country. This is instrumental in customizing the international frameworks to best suit the circumstances of the respective countries while at the same time respecting and entrenching internationally accepted standards of protection within the legislative and policy frameworks.

In the Kenyan context, IDP legislation was developed at a time when the discussion around IDPs was very emotive and political. As a matter of fact, it was only after the 2007/08 post election violence that Kenyans came alive to the term “IDP” but in some quarters it was viewed as a negative term or status. In such a context, the importance of forging and fostering cross-cutting partnerships with different Government ministries, UN agencies and civil society actors was imperative. He added that lobbying vigorously for bi-partisan support from various Members of Parliament was essential to guarantee the success of the enactment of the legislation. He hoped that each of the course’s participants will get an opportunity to learn from the Kenyan experience of engagement of CSOs with parliamentary processes as well as share some of their own experiences and best practices.

He further mentioned that Kenya is in the process of reviewing its asylum law through the Refugee Bill, 2012. “This will require the capacity building of both Senators and National Assembly members,” said Hon. Ekwe. “I therefore call upon the development partners some of whom are represented here to support the initiatives by CSOs to this worthwhile end.”

For more information about the Annual Regional Course on Forced Migration, 2014 securing or any issue on forced migration kindly contact **Lucy Kiama, the Executive Director of RCK** through 020 208 8060/7 or [refcon@rckkenya.org](mailto:refcon@rckkenya.org) or Andrew Maina, the Communication and Research Officer through 0725750001 or [maina@rckkenya.org](mailto:maina@rckkenya.org).