Rwanda will keep doors open to asylum seekers and refugees

JOHNSTON BUSINGYE

The Judicial Review into the UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership is in high gear. September also marks a milestone for Rwanda — the third anniversary of the first flight of refugees and asylum seekers evacuated from Libya to Rwanda.

The agreement, signed in 2019 between the Government of Rwanda, the UNHCR and the African Union has now seen 1,075 vulnerable people, who had been held in dangerous and life-threatening detention centres in Libya, moved to safety in Rwanda.

Boarding school

And in September 2021, the School of Leadership Afghanistan, the first and only girls boarding school in Afghanistan, rapidly relocated 250 staff and students to Rwanda and restarted in Kigali. The founder Shabaana Basij-Rasikh speaking at June’s Commonwealth Women’s Forum in Kigali said: “We are sincerely grateful for the generosity of Rwandans and Rwandans for welcoming us when the Taliban took over Afghanistan.”

From 1996 onwards Rwanda has received 76,530 refugees from neighbouring DRC in separate waves and, alongside the UNCHR we have provided them with safety and opportunity.

Rwanda currently hosts more than 130,000 refugees and asylum seekers, all handled in accordance with international law.

All those seeking sanctuary in Rwanda have the same opportunities as citizens to build and make their lives. They have a right to education, to equality before the law, employment and health services to mention a few.

Tragic history

The country’s policies have been shaped by our tragic history. Twenty eight years ago, the Genocide against the Tutsi left over one million dead and destroyed the very fabric of our society. But Rwanda was liberated from the shackles of ethnic extremism, exclusion, persecution, and a new nation emerged. Rwandans made a pact with their government, and with themselves to be united.

Rwanda’s new leaders nurtured an inclusive and welcoming society where all Rwandans and non-Rwandans on our territory find equality before the law, safety, security and equal opportunity. Our open-door policy to refugees is born from this enduring spirit.

Whether those in need come from Libya, Afghanistan, DR Congo, Burundi or the UK, Rwanda has this deep connection to all who seek sanctuary and will willingly provide them with hope, a new home and the chance to integrate and contribute to our society.

New or strange

There is nothing new or strange in respect to migrants being relocated to Rwanda from the UK or anywhere else. We have a solid, undeniable, constantly improving, and decades-long track record.

Rwanda’s commitment to humanitarian intervention in the face of the global migration crisis, will not be deterred.

We will continue to work with the UN, multilateral and bilateral partners, including the UK, to be part of the solution.

Johnston Busingye is Rwanda’s High Commissioner to the UK.