

ECDC NEWS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(May 8, 2002)

ECDC's African Refugee Conference Set May 13-15 in Washington, D.C.

African Refugees: The Quest for Solutions in a Changing World will be the theme for ECDC's eighth national conference scheduled for May 13-15 at the Wyndham City Center Hotel, 1143 New Hampshire Avenue, N.W. in Washington, D.C.

Plenary and workshop sessions will examine how the nations' refugee resettlement program is still struggling to recover from the enormous impacts of the September 11 terrorist attacks, how new safety and security procedures are being implemented in Africa and prospects for achieving the current year target of 70,000 new admissions, including 22,000 from Africa.

All clearance and processing steps were suspended immediately after the attacks, pending a thorough review by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Department of State. Resuming slowly in December, new arrivals through March totaled only 5,403, compared to 31,533 for the same period last year. Of that total, only 308 had arrived from Africa, compared to 9,325 the previous year.

Key federal officials charged with administering the resettlement program are scheduled to participate in the conference, along with leaders of local organizations around the nation which provide services to refugees and immigrants. The keynote speaker for the opening session (Monday, May 13 at 8:45 a.m.) will be Noah Samara, an Ethiopian immigrant who is founder and CEO of WorldSpace Corporation. Representative John Conyers (D-Mich.) will deliver a 1 p.m. luncheon address on Tuesday.

Several program segments, supported by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, will deal with various aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa and prevention efforts within the African community in the United States.

Annually the conference attracts national and international refugee service providers and representatives from federal, state and local government agencies, voluntary organizations and others interested in humanitarian issues and international affairs.

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