

# ECDC NEWS

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## Let World Refugee Day 2004 Be a Time Of Remembrance, ECDC President Urges

With nearly 75 percent of Africa's three million refugees having languished in crowded camps for five to 20 years or longer, ECDC President Tsehaye Teferra is urging that World Refugee Day 2004 on June 20 be observed as a time of remembrance for those so long "warehoused," and for those whose lives have been lost in desperate pursuit of peace and security.

In his "Opinion" column in the June issue of the agency's monthly *African Refugee NETWORK* newsletter, he notes that the day is traditionally—and appropriately—observed as a celebration of the courage, stamina and spirit of refugees fleeing violent conflict, persecution and terror. The theme of this year's observance is "A Place to Call Home: Rebuilding Lives in Safety and Dignity."

"Long-staying refugees are the world's truly homeless people," Teferra writes. "They are denied any prospect of repatriation because of entrenched racial, tribal or ethnic hatreds. They are unable to gain integration into their country of first asylum because of social, cultural or economic barriers. They are generally shut off from any place to call home, other than the resettlement to a third country."

By making this year's event a time for both celebration and remembrance of the millions of refugees who were never able to return home again, Teferra expresses "my hope and prayer that we will advance the arrival of that time when such an observance is neither appropriate nor needed."

ECDC is a community-based organization established in 1983 to promote cultural, educational and socio-economic development programs to assist refugees and immigrants in become productive members of their new homeland. It is one of ten agencies operating in partnership with the nation's refugee resettlement program to welcome and support refugee newcomers to the United States.

In a letter to the White House commending President Bush's reaffirmation of support for the resettlement program at a recent national conference on faith-based and community initiatives, Teferra urged that the commitment be reflected more adequately in federal funding levels, and that the admission ceiling for African refugees be increased to 35,000.

The Bush administration's budget request for 2005 is \$30 million lower than current-year funding. This year's admission ceiling for African refugees is 25,000.

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