**Campaign for equitable framework for response to emergencies**

The following is a suggested letter for groups to use and adapt in order to add their voices to call for equitable responses to emergencies. We encourage groups to edit the letter to reflect their priorities and concerns, and to fit the recipient of the letter, and to send it to their Member of Parliament and/or to the Minister, Marc Miller.

TEMPLATE LETTER

Find contact information for your Member of Parliament: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Members/en>

For Minister: Minister@cic.gc.ca

Dear Mr/Ms name of MP /Minister,

[Congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship.]

We wish to express our support for the immigration measures adopted by the Canadian government over recent years to respond to people fleeing Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover, and Ukraine following the Russian invasion. The federal government has set important precedents marking a roadmap on how Canada is to respond to urgent crisis situations.

In particular, the measures adopted for Ukrainians stand out in that they demonstrate a new openness to offering temporary visas to people fleeing an emergency. We are hopeful that these measures will be extended to many other peoples that are in similar situations in other geographical areas.

Historically, the Canadian government has refused to issue temporary visas to people affected by a crisis when the temporary stay of an individual may turn permanent. The government’s new approach is a humanitarian improvement in that it allows Canada to offer refuge much more quickly - and to many more people - than through the permanent residence process.

To ensure equity in access and to dismantle current perceptions that some lives are more valuable or worthy of protection than others, it will be important to make certain that these measures are made accessible to all without discrimination.

In particular, we want to draw attention to the fact that crises in Africa, despite being numerous, rarely if ever have been met with a Canadian immigration emergency response program.

Moreover, measures need to account for the particular vulnerabilities of people with disabilities, trans and gender diverse persons, women, elders, and others who faced challenges and barriers when attempting to cross borders and who are usually disproportionally targeted by these crises.

We also draw attention to the need to be responsive to non-nationals who are displaced a second time by an emergency. This has been the experience recently where refugees, some of them in process to be resettled to Canada, have been displaced by the conflicts in Ukraine and Sudan.

The positive measures introduced in response to the displacement from Ukraine must apply to other similar situations. A fundamental principle of refugee protection is that it must be offered irrespective of race, religion, or ethnic background. Canadians want to know that their government is responding equitably to all emergencies. This is particularly true for Canadians with origins in parts of the world that too often seem to be neglected.

We urge the government to develop a framework for responding to other similar crises, using this response as a precedent. [If writing to an opposition MP, change to something like: “We urge you to call on the government to develop a framework for responding to other similar crises, using this response as a precedent”.] The rapid response framework should be based on objective criteria driven by the need for the protection of displaced peoples, rather than wide media coverage or organized political pressure. We support the criteria recommended by the Canadian Council for Refugees:

* Be transparent
* Respect equity in responses
* Avoid negative impacts on other refugees (through respecting the principle of additionality – both of numbers and of resources)
* Provide resettlement primarily through the Government Assisted Refugee Program (because private sponsors should not bear the main responsibility for emergency responses, and it is important to avoid an impact on other privately sponsored refugees)

We note that at present, for example:

* The civil war in Sudan has already displaced over 3 million people, living in extremely vulnerable conditions. These include some already escaping from war or oppression in their own countries of citizenship.
* A significant proportion of the millions displaced by the civil war in northern Ethiopia remain displaced, with no obvious process for a durable solution.
* Ethnic conflict continues in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, aggravated by the involvement of external interests, with again millions of people displaced.

As Canada aspires to be recognized as a leading country for refugee protection and works to dismantle systemic racism, it is crucial that we adopt an equitable framework for responding to crises, based on humanitarian principles. The forgotten crises must not continue to be forgotten by Canada.

Yours sincerely,