Rwanda welcomed 153 asylum seekers Thursday night, the latest group evacuated from Libya through a transit mechanism, according to the ministry in charge of emergency management.

In a statement, the ministry said they are from five nationalities: 82 Sudanese, 56 Eritrean, 5 Somali, 9 Ethiopian, and 1 South Sudanese.

“They will be accommodated at the Gashora Transit Center, where other evacuees who arrived before are hosted” the statement said.

Since the start of the Mediterranean crisis in 2014, UNHCR has been at the forefront of efforts to assist the most vulnerable, including relocating them to safe and secure places outside Libya. In September 2019, Rwanda signed the first Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR and the African Union (AU) to evacuate refugees and asylum-seekers from Libya to Rwanda.

Under the MoU, UNHCR in collaboration with the Government of Rwanda and the AU established an Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM) in Gashora Sector, Bugesera District, Rwanda, to support up to 500 refugees and asylum seekers evacuated from Libya (at any given time) and to conduct case processing for resettlement and other durable solutions.

Subsequently in October 2021, the first Addendum to the tripartite MoU was signed by the parties, who agreed to renew and extend the MoU until December 2023, increasing the total number of individuals to be hosted in the centre to 700 people at any given time.

The aim of the ETM is to temporarily host refugees and asylum seekers who have undertaken voluntary evacuation from Libya. While in the ETM, asylum seekers go through refugee case processing undertaken by UNHCR to determine if they meet the requirements for durable solutions which mainly involves resettlement to a third country.