

**75th meeting of the Standing Committee
18-20 June 2019
Agenda item 2 (d)**

**Oral update on the preparations for the high-level segment on statelessness at the
seventieth plenary session of the Executive Committee**

Statement of the Special Advisor on Statelessness, Ms. Carol Batchelor

Chair, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to have the opportunity today to provide you with an update on the ongoing preparations for the High-Level Segment on Statelessness which will take place at the next Executive Committee meeting this October.

This year, 2019, marks the mid-way point in the ten-year Campaign to End Statelessness, the #IBelong Campaign. Launched by UNHCR in 2014, the #IBelong Campaign seeks to end the global problem of statelessness by 2024. This means that in 2024, everyone who is currently stateless and anyone born stateless between now and 2024 will have a solution in hand, the solution of nationality which will allow them to say "I too belong". This is a very ambitious goal, not achievable overnight, but doable through collective will and commitment.

Toward that end, the High Commissioner has determined that the year 2019, the mid-point of the Campaign, is the time when we should come together, review our individual and collective successes, share ideas about practices found to resolve statelessness, and offer our suggestions and commitments on the road to 2024. Waiting until 2024 is too lateour ability to ensure the success of the Campaign depends upon action now.

In the background document for this oral update you will see 10 critical steps outlined as key areas to address in the course of the ten-year Campaign. These steps or goals highlight gap areas which, if addressed by all states and organizations globally, would have a major impact in ensuring that statelessness ends. For example, if every state ensures that no child under its jurisdiction is born stateless, whether born on the state's territory or born abroad to a national of the state, statelessness would end within a generation. Of course the birth of a child must be known in order for this to work in practice, which is one reason why ensuring birth registration is so important. Avoiding statelessness at birth and ensuring birth registration are two of the Campaign's goals. Great progress has been made in the first five years of the Campaign thanks to the efforts of so many of you gathered here today.

If we wait however until 2024 to take stock of successes and to address remaining gaps, we risk losing the full potential of this important, first ever global Campaign to End Statelessness. So, this ExCom will play a special role in review of how the Campaign is progressing. As referenced in the background note, the High-Level Segment provides states, international and regional organizations, civil society and others with the opportunity to outline what has worked. What achievements can be shared? What approaches successfully identified problems of statelessness and resolved them? What actions have been taken during the first half of the Campaign which facilitated the acquisition of a nationality? You are each invited to ensure that in your presentations during the general debate at ExCom you highlight what has worked, solutions. This aspect will review and report on the first half of the ten-year Campaign.

The High-Level Segment is equally a pledging event. This means that states, partners, and organizations are also invited to outline in their statement during the general debate what commitments or pledges they make to ensure that by 2024 statelessness has ended. Pledges might include any of the 10 goals outlined at the beginning of the Campaign and detailed in today's background paper as these are key areas to address to avoid statelessness. However, creative thinking is also welcome as is any pledge which is concrete, timebound to 2024, and part of a measurable action to end statelessness. This aspect will anticipate the last half of the ten-year Campaign and provide an outline of critical areas we can rally to support.

To facilitate this review of the first half and set of pledges toward the second half of the Campaign, UNHCR has been working with states and partners at the national and regional levels in particular, holding preparatory meetings around the globe, and collaborating together in pre High-Level Segment gatherings. These meetings help to identify at local and regional levels successes to date which should be highlighted and showcased at ExCom, as well as to consider commitments which might be announced and recorded during ExCom to rally our collective efforts in the lead up to 2024. These events have exceeded expectations in terms of identifying effective practices, showcasing constructive developments and solutions, and outlining anticipated pledges in many instances. We hope to see these proposals materialize into concrete, announced commitments during ExCom. Our Representatives globally are reaching out to all to encourage and facilitate this.

Here I would like to thank as well the many supporters of the Campaign and of the efforts leading up to the High-Level Segment, including the Friends of the Campaign here in Geneva. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the concrete support of many of you for our statelessness program which has made these efforts possible, including Germany for their generous contribution. Appreciation is also expressed for those states which have co-hosted regional events in preparation for the High-Level Segment.

The High Commissioner has sent out save-the-date letters. Outreach to states and institutions has also taken place at the individual level where relevant. A dedicated website has been made available complete with Concept Note of the HLS and an outline of how to make pledges. Briefings continue with states, organizations and with the ExCom Bureau in the lead up to the HLS. I am pleased to be joined on the podium by colleagues from the Division of International Protection and the Division of External Relations. The High-Level Segment is preceded by five years of focused efforts together with states and partners in raising awareness and advancing the goals of the Campaign which has required continuous outreach, advocacy, technical advice and support, and increasing visibility. UNHCR is currently updating its communications strategy for the Campaign and DER plans to prepare messaging, press release templates and other assets to help amplify the news coming out of the HLS. DIP has firmly rooted the Campaign efforts through a continuously expanded network of partners working toward the eradication of statelessness, including those within the UN. This network has been rallied to ensure all those concerned have a presence at the High-Level Segment, outline achievements to date, and announce their commitments going forward.

The High-Level Segment itself will be on the first day of ExCom as part of the opening ceremony. It will be comprised of a high-level, interactive panel of prominent experts from a variety of backgrounds. Personal experience of statelessness will feature as well. Participants include the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed, the High

Commissioner for Human Rights, Michele Bachelet, prominent personalities, policy makers and advocates.

Over the lunch break a special side event organized by non-governmental organizations will take place, complete with experts and information sharing opportunities. Additionally, a special treaty event will be hosted by our High Commissioner to showcase all states which have acceded to one or both of the Statelessness Conventions during the first five years of the Campaign. We have invited the UN Office of Legal Affairs to join us making it possible for any state to provide their instruments of accession to the Treaty Office during the ceremony itself. A designated photo exhibition is also under preparation which, along with media outreach, will outline personal and individual stories of and from stateless persons themselves.

Key to the success of the High-Level Segment itself will be the interventions from each of you during the general debate. I would like to highlight that there is no separate event on statelessness: rather, ExCom *is* the event on statelessness with a dedicated opening segment followed by the general debate. It is important that whoever provides the statement on behalf of your state or organization knows to outline your accomplishments, your successes, and your pledges in this statement. This is a key moment to highlight, celebrate and showcase your efforts and to confirm pledges. These commitments will be compiled for reference as we go forward to 2024, in mutual support toward a single objective, ending statelessness.

It has often been said that in a world divided into states, there is no place where a stateless person can say they belong. Going to school, marrying and building a family, working and providing for your children, contributing to the society in which you live, being able to travel abroad, having the protection of a state, even being able to go home after a meeting such as this all of this eludes a stateless person. Ending statelessness is a laudable goal, but it cannot happen through good intentions alone. Specific actions are needed. To make them meaningful for people these actions are needed within a timeframe, within their own experience. This is why the #IBelong Campaign was launched, to try to bring into focus not only to what it means to be stateless, but what it requires to end statelessness. While much has been accomplished, and we will certainly hear at the HLS of many extremely positive efforts which have ended statelessness for many people around the world, there remain far too many people today who cannot say they belong anywhere. We invite states, organizations and partners alike to join us at the HLS with concrete pledges in hand as a pivotal and critical moment on the road to success in 2024.

I thank you Chairman, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen for your kind consideration.