



# High Level Segment on Statelessness

Monday, 7 October 2019

70th Annual Session of UNHCR's Executive Committee  
Mid-point #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness  
2014 – 2024

*Palais de Nations, Geneva*

## Objective of the High-Level Segment

To mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024, UNHCR will convene a global High-Level Segment on Statelessness (HLS) on the first day of the seventieth annual session of UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom).<sup>1</sup> The High-Level Segment on Statelessness is an integral part of ExCom, which will include the participation of all United Nations Member and Observer States, intergovernmental organizations, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders. The event will give participants an opportunity to highlight key achievements in addressing statelessness since the Campaign was launched in November 2014, as well as to deliver concrete pledges to address statelessness in the remaining five years of the Campaign.

The High-Level Segment on Statelessness will feature an interview with a formerly stateless person and a high-level panel moderated by a prominent broadcaster and TV personality. Over the lunch break a Ceremonial Treaty Event jointly hosted by the High Commissioner and the UN Deputy Secretary-General, followed by a Civil Society Event featuring the perspectives and contributions of civil society will take place. UNHCR will also launch a Photo Exhibition entitled “We Belong: *Global Faces of Statelessness*” to illustrate the individual circumstances for those who are stateless.

The objective of the High-Level Segment is to give renewed impetus to the #IBelong Campaign by taking stock of successes to date in the first five years since its launch, and critically to secure pledges and commitments toward heightened action which will end statelessness by 2024. The High-Level Segment will open with a one-on-one interview between Cate Blanchett and Maha Mamo, outlining what it means to be stateless, the difference having a nationality

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<sup>1</sup> The Executive Committee is the governing body of UNHCR which meets annually in Geneva to review and approve the Agency's programs and budget, advise on international protection and discuss a range of other issues with UNHCR, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. The Executive Committee is held from 7 to 11 October 2019.

makes in the lives of those impacted, and the great potential for solutions where there is a collective will and commitment. This interview sets a framework for discussion and motivated engagement. Following the interview, a high-level panel of dynamic and influential actors (biographies below) will engage with the Moderator, Anita Rani, reflecting on current challenges in identifying and addressing statelessness, and offering informed and expert perspectives on the way forward in finally ending statelessness. The high-level panelists will be invited by the Moderator to unpack the challenges and opportunities associated with the goal of ending statelessness by 2024, with a focus on good practices and areas where pledges and commitments can facilitate solutions.

Information on accreditation to the Palais will be provided separately.

## Background

Statelessness has a devastating impact on the lives of millions of people around the world. UNHCR has called for a committed, resolute effort by the international community to end statelessness. Amid signs of a shift in international attitudes surrounding statelessness and a growing momentum to address the issue, UNHCR launched the #IBelong Campaign on 4 November 2014 with the goal of ending statelessness within 10 years. The #IBelong Campaign aims to achieve its 2024 target to end statelessness by resolving existing statelessness situations and preventing new cases from emerging. These goals will be achieved in accordance with the guiding framework of the *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014 – 2024 ('Global Action Plan')*<sup>2</sup>. The Global Action Plan encourages States to take the following ten actions with the support of UNHCR and other stakeholders:

1. Resolve major existing situations of statelessness;
2. Ensure that no child is born stateless;
3. Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws;
4. Prevent denial, loss or deprivation of nationality on discriminatory grounds;
5. Prevent statelessness in cases of state succession;
6. Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization;
7. Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness;
8. Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it;
9. Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions;
10. Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations.

Five years into the #IBelong Campaign, States, civil society, UN agencies and stateless persons have all contributed to notable achievements. For example: 7 States have introduced safeguards to prevent childhood statelessness; 2 States (Madagascar and Sierra Leone) reformed their nationality law to allow women to confer nationality to their children on an equal basis as men; 11 States introduced or improved statelessness determination procedures; 15 States have acceded to one or both of the Statelessness Conventions resulting in 20 accessions; and there has been much progress around the globe in ensuring universal access to birth registration. In 2019, Kyrgyzstan became the first country to announce resolution of all known cases of statelessness on its territory.

However, despite all this progress, there are still millions of stateless people worldwide and the situation for some stateless groups such as the Rohingya continues to have severe

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<sup>2</sup> See accompanying materials.

consequences. Much more needs to be done to achieve the goal of ending statelessness. More action, in particular, needs to be taken to resolve large protracted situations of statelessness (action 1 of the Global Action Plan), reduce the number of countries that have gender discrimination in their nationality laws (action 3 of the Global Action Plan) and improve the available data on stateless persons (action 10 of the Global Action Plan).