

**67<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee**  
**21-22 September 2016**  
**Agenda item 4(ii)**  
**Oral Update on the Campaign to End Statelessness**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the almost two years since the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness was launched, global awareness of statelessness and the political will to address it have increased substantially. Thanks in part to regional initiatives such as the Abidjan Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness and the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action, a number of States have developed National Action Plans that envision the reforms necessary to prevent and resolve statelessness; significant numbers of States have already begun making legislative and policy changes; and many governments worldwide have granted or confirmed nationality for hundreds or thousands of stateless persons in the last year alone. As of this week, which saw Guinea-Bissau's accession to both statelessness conventions on Monday, ten governments have acceded to one or both of the statelessness conventions since the Campaign was launched, bringing the total number of Parties to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness to 89 and 68, respectively.

UNHCR's strategy for achieving the Campaign's ambitious goals relies on enhanced diplomacy, stronger civil society engagement, and more robust engagement by other international organizations. We are witnessing progress on all of these fronts thanks to many of you in this room. The "Friends of the Campaign" group, launched in October 2015, is now meeting quarterly in Geneva. The States in this group and others have been active bilaterally, regionally, and globally. At the global level, a resolution on the Right to Nationality was adopted by the Human Rights Council in June with 111 co-sponsors. The follow up work called for in the resolution will provide an important platform for cooperation among UNHCR, OHCHR, States and civil society to disseminate good practices, particularly with respect to the elimination of gender discrimination from nationality laws. At the regional level, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted a draft Protocol on the Right to Nationality that will go to AU Member States for review in 2017. A regional conference on statelessness in Central Asia was hosted by Turkmenistan just last week, and next month the League of Arab States, together with UNHCR, will hold an expert meeting on the theme of legal identity and belonging. In Asia, work is ongoing under the Bali process to produce a toolkit to support the commitment made by all states in the region to universal civil registration. In Europe, following the adoption in 2015 of the first ever EU Council Conclusions on Statelessness, UNHCR is working closely with EU institutions to encourage engagement with governments, civil society and others to end statelessness within the Union and beyond. And finally, in the Americas, the Organization of American States General Assembly earlier this year passed a resolution welcoming the #IBelong Campaign and urging action to prevent and resolve statelessness.

Civil society is also increasing its engagement. In June 2016 several dozen NGOs, including international human rights organisations attended UNHCR's global statelessness retreat. That retreat resulted in agreement on a number of shared strategic objectives for the year ahead, including cooperation to make more effective use of the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, and to launch a coalition on Every Child's Right to Nationality. New

regional civil society networks have sprung up, complementing those already in place in Europe and the Americas.

On the inter-agency front, UNHCR has launched an effort to reinvigorate cooperation and shared ownership of this issue in relation to the rule of law, human rights, and development mandates of other agencies. A one-day inter-agency dialogue on statelessness held in New York in June of this year attracted strong support from UN organizations and the World Bank. UNICEF has committed to partner with UNHCR on the new Coalition to ensure Every Child's Right to Nationality, for example, and UNHCR and the World Bank are finding synergies between the Campaign and the Bank's new "ID4D Initiative," which aims to ensure that every person on the planet has ID by 2030, consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 16.9. The Sustainable Development Goals generally provide important opportunities for UNHCR to expand its partnerships with development actors to address the root causes of statelessness and advocate for inclusion of stateless persons in development planning. In order to capitalize on this, UNHCR recently published a guide for all operations on the intersection between the SDGs and UNHCR's statelessness mandate.

At the end of 2015 UNHCR and the Inter-Parliamentary Union co-organized, with the Parliament of South Africa, a Conference on Ensuring Everyone's Right to Nationality that attracted over a hundred Parliamentarians worldwide and that continued the strong partnership that UNHCR already enjoys with the IPU on this issue.

Still, more needs to be done. The year 2017 will be critical for the Campaign, as it marks the first of the official milestone years, when progress will be measured against each of the 10 Actions in UNHCR's Global Action Plan. Notwithstanding positive developments to date, many targets reflected in the 2017 milestones are unlikely to be met, and additional support will be needed to accelerate progress.

We must do all we can to build on the achievements we're already seeing at the country level. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, UNHCR's new partnership with the Ministry of Justice supported approximately 5,000 stateless people to acquire Ivorian nationality as of June 2016. In Central Asia, UNHCR's work with government and NGO partners has promoted the identification and resolution of the cases of tens of thousands of stateless people in recent years. In Thailand, close cooperation with the Royal Thai Government and NGO partners working with stateless communities has resulted in the granting of nationality to more than 23,000 stateless individuals over the past three and a half years, bringing the total registered population down to 438,821. In 2016, the Government of Bolivia adopted a resolution to facilitate the naturalization of stateless persons and refugees and Costa Rica adopted a statelessness determination procedure. In the MENA region, birth registration rates among refugees have risen substantially in the last two years thanks to collective efforts to mitigate the risk of statelessness among the forcibly displaced.

In order to mainstream statelessness more thoroughly in operational responses, in 2016 UNHCR launched an initiative to strengthen operations' ability to plan and programme to address statelessness. Together DIP and DPSM have produced new guidance on this topic and will undertake joint field missions to support stronger planning in this area next month.

We thank you for your support in this endeavour. Your continued partnership in raising awareness and advocating for best practices will be critical to our collective success. Thank you.