

**72<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee, 19-21 June 2018**  
**Oral Update on the Campaign to End Statelessness**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last year important progress has been made under the auspices of the #IBelong Campaign. In line with Campaign's "Global Action Plan", the Office has worked to resolve situations of statelessness and to prevent new ones from arising by promoting accessions to the Statelessness Conventions and reforms to nationality laws to bring them in line with international standards.

In 2017, 56,500 stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality acquired nationality or had their nationality confirmed. Burkina Faso, Luxembourg, and Chile all recently acceded to one or both of the Statelessness Conventions, raising the total number of accessions since the Campaign was launched a few short years ago to 17, and bringing the total number of Parties to the 1954 Convention to 90 and the total number of Parties to the 1961 Convention to 71.

In 2017 Madagascar and Sierra Leone became the first States since the launch of the Campaign to reform their laws to allow women to confer nationality to their children on the same basis as men. This has brought the number of States that continue to deny women this right down to 25 globally. At the same time, Armenia, Cuba and Peru have all simplified the process to grant nationality to a child born to its nationals abroad, reforms which help prevent childhood statelessness.

Brazil, Ecuador and Montenegro recently adopted dedicated statelessness determination procedures to identify and grant stateless persons on their territories legal status. New national Action Plans to address statelessness were adopted by Burkina Faso and Mali.

New regional commitments continue to illustrate an increase in awareness and political will. Exactly one year ago the Banjul Plan of Action entered into force for members of ECOWAS, perhaps the most robust regional action to date on statelessness. In October 2017, twelve Member States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) signed the *Declaration of International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Member States on the Eradication of Statelessness*. These States also committed to a concrete plan of action to implement their Declaration commitments. Three expert meetings have now been held to discuss a draft African Union Protocol on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness, and it is hoped that this Protocol will now move forward for adoption by States as a progressive instrument on nationality law matters. In the Middle East and North Africa, Members of the League of Arab States adopted a *Declaration on Belonging and Legal Identity*, a ground-breaking document that calls for equal nationality rights for women and for all children to be able to enjoy their right to a legal identity. A regional consultation among Latin American and Caribbean States was held in Brazil to take stock of implementation of the Brazil Plan of Action to date and to contribute to the Global Compact on Refugees; the "100 Points of Brasilia" adopted there included nine good practices on statelessness. These regional instruments all provide a strong basis for additional progress at the national level.

There has been increased attention to statelessness issues through the human rights mechanisms of the UN, including the Universal Periodic Review and the special procedures. Statelessness is now recognized as an important development issue as well as a human rights one thanks in part to the commitment as part of the Sustainable Development Agenda to “leave no one behind” and to ensure birth registration and legal identity for all. UNHCR will encourage attention to the issue at the High Level Political Forum on the SDGs in 2019, and improved data and research on statelessness will be an important area of work of the new Joint Data Initiative with the World Bank. Statelessness issues have already found solid footing the Program of Action of the Global Compact on Refugees, and will be an important part of the work under the GCR and CRRF in years to come.

Strengthened partnerships with Member States, including the Friends of the Campaign to End Statelessness, civil society groups, regional organizations, faith-based groups and sister agencies have all contributed to progress and will be critical going forward towards the High-Level Event on Statelessness that UNHCR will convene with partners in October 2019. Between now and then, a number of regional preparatory meetings are planned. These regional meetings will allow UNHCR to support States—and States to support each other—in preparing achievements and pledges that can be showcased at the High-Level Event. The 2019 event will mark the mid-point in UNHCR’s Campaign and the achievements and pledges made there will set the stage for the Campaign’s second half. In recognition of the importance of this event and of the Campaign, as you know Carol Batchelor has just taken up a new role as Special Advisor on Statelessness and will be fully dedicated to this issue and preparation of the High-Level Event between now and then. She and we look forward to stepping up our engagement with all of you accordingly in the months ahead. Finally, I’m pleased to note that in the last two weeks there have been very successful regional preparatory events convened in Kazakhstan and in Chile for States from Central Asia and the Americas, respectively, and we look forward to additional opportunities to support States in exchanging good practices and preparing pledges for the High Level Event.