



**Statement of Montenegro**  
**70<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNHCR EXCOM**  
**High Level Segment**

Mr. High Commissioner,  
Your Excellences,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor to be able to address you today on behalf of Montenegro. Allow me to extend my gratitude for organization of the High-Level Segment on Statelessness. I sincerely believe that this will be a great opportunity to discuss progress in responding to issues, which have a devastating impact on the lives of at least 10 million stateless people worldwide.

Mr. Chairman,

Citizenship is one of the key conditions for active participation in decision-making, as well as for access to a wide range of rights. Stateless persons are deprived of the enjoyment of basic human rights. It is our responsibility to protect them.

Considering the significance of the global problem of statelessness, Montenegro is a signatory to the most significant conventions covering this area.

Primarily, Montenegro is a country which, following the 1990s wars, has accepted 130,000 refugees. At least 30,000 have decided to build their life in Montenegro and have acquired citizenship. Montenegro has had a comprehensive legislative framework previously as a member of Yugoslavia and now as an independent state. In 2008, Montenegro passed the Law on Montenegrin Citizenship, which left no room for any person born on the territory of Montenegro to be stateless, in line with principles embedded in the European Convention on Nationality. However, with the arrival of internally displaced persons and persons displaced from the former Yugoslav republics, stateless persons were among them, although not in large numbers.

Montenegro is one of the countries that has established the procedure for determining the status of stateless persons through the adoption of a new Law on Foreigners, which entered into force in March 2018, and the Rulebook defining more detailed procedures for determining the status of stateless persons and identity documents issued to these persons. In accordance with this law, activities have been undertaken to establish and recognize the status of stateless persons, ensuring their enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms in line with the ratified conventions.

In addition to the new Law on Foreigners, the enactment of the Law on Non-Contentious Proceedings, which entered into force in 2015, provided full legal certainty for determining the time and place of birth of a child through the initiation of judicial procedure before a competent court.

In order to establish mechanisms for cooperation in resolving status issues of internally displaced persons from Kosovo residing in Montenegro, an Agreement was signed in 2013 between the Government of Montenegro and the Government of the Republic of Kosovo. In accordance with this document, the combined mobile biometric teams of the MoI of Montenegro, the MoI of Kosovo and UNHCR provided intensive legal and practical assistance to IDPs from Kosovo. Several visits of the Kosovo MoI mobile teams were organized, during which a large number of persons was assisted in obtaining Kosovar documents.

Due to the specific nature of this vulnerable social group, mainly the RAE population, Montenegro has additionally provided privileged access to rights.

We are proud of this activity and the comprehensive range of activities that, through the joint action of all entities, notably the UNHCR, have resulted in a sustainable solution to the legal status of these persons in Montenegro.

One should not forget the example of the commitment, care and efforts of the Government of Montenegro to regulate legal status of all persons in Montenegro. The Government published a public call in 2014 to persons residing in Montenegro and have no access to citizenship of any state or cannot prove it. The public call lasted for 60 days, during which 486 persons responded as a result of the proactive approach of the Ministry of the Interior and UNHCR. Analysis showed that out of this number, only 7 persons did not have citizenship of any state at that time. However, in the meantime, these persons have regulated their legal status in Montenegro.

Lastly, I want to assure you of Montenegro's willingness to contribute to addressing this issue, but also of our continued support for UNHCR and its activities aimed at preventing and eradicating statelessness. We strongly believe that intensifying activities within the *I belong campaign* will further contribute to raising public, national and international support to ultimately end the fight against statelessness in the next five years.