



STATEMENT

by

**The Honorable Minister of Local Government, chieftainship,
Home Affairs and Police of the Kingdom of Lesotho**

HON. LEBONA FABIAN LEPHEMA

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Chairperson

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with a profound sense of humility that I take this opportunity to address this gathering on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Lesotho. At the onset, Lesotho wishes to congratulate Mr. Filippo Grandi and members of the Bureau, for their exceptional leadership which will, with no doubt, guide the deliberations of this 75th Executive Committee Meeting (ExCom) of the United Nations Commissioner's Programme, which marks the end of the "I Belong Campaign."

The Kingdom of Lesotho aligns itself with the statement delivered by Congo on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Chair

In an era, riddled with geo-political tensions, increased migration flows, climate change, terrorism and economic disruptions, among other challenges, stateless persons are disproportionately affected, and continue to bear the brunt of the consequences, in

the midst of these challenges. It is in this sense that Lesotho views today`s dialogue on statelessness, as fundamental and we wish to register our Government`s interest in joining the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. This is a step forward, in reaffirming our commitment to the eradication of statelessness, which is echoed in the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness respectively.

These Conventions remain a profound milestone in articulating measures that States and the international community should take to provide a nationality to people who are currently stateless, and to prevent new cases of statelessness from occurring.

My delegation welcomes the convening of this important and timely session, which we view as a platform which has been intrinsically accorded to States, to take stock of the achievements made and challenges experienced in the quest to implement the `I belong Campaign.`

In this regard, it is my singular honour to share that the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho is in the progress of the

enacting the Immigration and Citizenship Act which repeals the Aliens Control Act 1966. The envisaged Act provides safety nets against stateless at birth by granting nationality to children born or found in the territory of the Kingdom of Lesotho who will otherwise be stateless.

In the same vein, the Kingdom of Lesotho adopted the whole of society and whole of government approach in dealing with statelessness issues. This is exhibited in various partnerships, including those with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees South African Multi Country office, Transformation Resource Centre, Lesotho Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice and Skillshare. This approach signifies Lesotho's commitment in the identification, determination and protection of stateless persons, as well as reduction of statelessness as a whole.

We further wish to share that, in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 and the spirit of the 2030 Agenda, of leaving no one behind, the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, through its National Identity and Civil Registry has taken robust steps in ensuring that legal identity is provided for all, including through birth registration.

Mr. Chair

Furthermore, my Government is in the process of undertaking and publishing a qualitative study with a view of finding durable solutions and to better understand the situation of groups and individuals, that are at the risk of statelessness. We are also currently engaged in Intensive mass mobile registration of citizens, migrants in regular status as well as refugees, into the National Population register.

Progress notwithstanding, Lesotho grapples with the challenge of acquiring evidence-based data on statelessness, and we believe that with proper collaboration and information sharing among relevant stakeholders, this could go a long way in achieving or implementing Government's migration agenda, which includes issues around statelessness. In this regard, we cognisant of the fact that migrants in irregular situations face hardships in their daily lives and are susceptible to violations of their human rights. Lesotho would therefore, appreciate the support of the international community to undertake a study to inform development of evidence-based policies in tackling the scourge, raising awareness on statelessness and advocating for inclusion of migrants at the risk of stateless, regardless of their migratory status.

Mr. Chair,

It is our collective responsibility to get closer to the goal of ending statelessness globally. My delegation is of the firm belief that, it is imperative for states and non-state actors to apply an intersectionality framework, in order to address the challenges faced by stateless persons. When this is applied, this may have the likelihood of transforming governance, by dismantling exclusionary forms of citizenship, which are rooted in patriarchy and other forms of discrimination and stereotypes. Yet unless the 1954 and 1961 Conventions are again placed at the centre of such efforts, they are likely to remain unfruitful. It is of utmost importance, therefore, to rekindle the essence of the 1961 Convention and its fundamental purpose: the prevention of statelessness and its reduction, over time.

I wish to end my statement by reaffirming Lesotho's unwavering commitment to the United Nations and regional conventions and protocols on eradication of Statelessness and to protecting the lives of refugees, stateless persons and internally displaced persons.

I thank you Chair.