



# AUSTRALIA

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## **Joint statement on behalf of the Group of Friends of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness**

**UNHCR 68<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme**

**General Debate**

**2 October 2017**

I am pleased to address you on behalf of the Group of Friends of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, a cross-regional group of states committed to ending statelessness by 2024.

Statelessness affects millions of people across the globe. Denial of the right to a nationality can impact the realization of other human rights. Statelessness heightens the risks of displacement, irregular migratory movements, family separation, exploitation, and abuse. In all contexts, statelessness can negatively impact the freedom of movement and access to education, health care, justice, and livelihoods.

The Group of Friends had the honour to address the Executive Committee last year, and is pleased to do so again, with positive progress to report in the last 12 months.

We welcome reforms in Madagascar and Sierra Leone which have resulted in a reduction in the number of States that do not allow mothers to transfer nationality to their children on an equal basis with fathers. We're pleased to note that the number of Parties to the 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions has increased to 89 and 69 respectively, as compared with 83 and 61 when UNHCR launched the Campaign in 2014.

We welcome the adoption of National Action Plans to address and resolve situations of statelessness in countries including Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Nigeria, which signal their commitment to implementing the ECOWAS Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness in West Africa. We also welcome efforts to end statelessness among school children in Thailand, as well as a new migration law passed in Brazil mandating the establishment of statelessness determination procedures and facilitating the acquisition of nationality for stateless persons.

We commend successes at the regional level, including the creation and strengthening of regional initiatives such as the Banjul Plan of Action and the new draft Declaration by member States of the International Conference of Great Lakes Region. We appreciate the strong engagement by regional organizations on the issue of statelessness.

We appreciate support from our growing number of partners. New civil society networks have been established to combat statelessness, including the new Central Asian Network on

Statelessness, joining the ranks of civil society organisations leading on the prevention of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons, such as the European and Americas Networks.

We appreciate collaboration between UNHCR and various partners to champion the issue of statelessness and mainstream it in their work, including; the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality that UNHCR co-leads with UNICEF, which has led to new joint strategies in 13 countries so far; the development of Principles on Identification for Sustainable Development and the new joint e-learning on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics with the World Bank, and; the 2017 workshop on the removal of gender discrimination from nationality laws with OHCHR.

We commend States and all relevant stakeholders for their leadership in this work; the progress is encouraging. However if we are to achieve an end to statelessness by 2024, it will be important not only to maintain this level of progress, but to increase momentum.

We are encouraged that solutions to statelessness are within reach in many contexts. We believe that UNHCR, as the mandate holder on the prevention and reduction of statelessness, is an essential actor in realizing these solutions. We encourage UNHCR to continue and strengthen its investment accordingly;

We appreciate the technical advice and training that UNHCR provides to support national legal reforms that aim to prevent and reduce statelessness, and encourage UNHCR to continue its partnership with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to encourage the adoption of best practices in this area;

We welcome UNHCR's cooperation with partners to support the mainstreaming of statelessness across the broader humanitarian, human rights and development agendas, and encourage it to continue its leadership in this regard;

We welcome the decision to host a High Level Event on statelessness in 2019 and express hope that in view of the crowded calendar this can be part of either ExCom or the High Commissioner's Dialogue in 2019;

We encourage all Member States to come to the High Level Event in 2019 with concrete achievements and pledges for further steps that will prevent and reduce statelessness;

We encourage UNHCR to consider and to integrate the issue of statelessness in the development of the Global Compact on Refugees and the operationalization of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, in acknowledgement of the link between the prevention and reduction of statelessness, and the protection of stateless persons in preventing and achieving solutions to refugee situations. Equally, we encourage all States to take into consideration the issue of statelessness in their substantive engagement in the processes leading to a Global Compact on Refugees and a global compact on safe, orderly, and regular migration;

We invite interested Member States to support the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, by joining the Group of Friends;

We undertake, as Friends of the Campaign, to work between now and the High Level Event in 2019 to do everything possible to help make it a success and move us closer to the goal of ending statelessness by 2024.