



UNHCR

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Centre in Ashgabat

Conclusions of the Regional Conference on Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness and Protection of Stateless Persons in Central Asia

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Since independence, the Central Asian States have taken major steps to avoid future statelessness, to grant nationality to stateless persons and to ensure that they enjoy a broad range of fundamental rights until such time as their status can be resolved. This is particularly the case for persons who became stateless as a result of state succession.

Prior to the regional conference, UNHCR organized national roundtables in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, where government representatives, together with UN and NGO partners, discussed best practices and remaining challenges in addressing statelessness in each State. In some countries, the roundtables led to the drafting of national action plans to address statelessness.

Among the good State practices brought to light by the Regional Conference are:

- Campaigns to replace USSR passports with valid identity documents;
- The identification of cases of statelessness through outreach and systematic registration of persons of undetermined or undocumented citizenship;
- Legal reform to remove legislative gaps which cause statelessness;
- Prompt, efficient and accessible birth registration;
- Adopting a flexible approach to proof of continuous residence on State territory for the purpose of confirmation or acquisition of citizenship;
- Legal reforms which have allowed for conferral of citizenship on some categories of stateless persons on the basis of residence;
- Granting nationality to large numbers of stateless persons;
- Granting a legal status to stateless persons and ensuring their enjoyment of a wide range of fundamental rights;
- Close cooperation between legislative, executive and judicative authorities, UNHCR, other UN agencies and civil society for the prevention and reduction of statelessness and the protection of stateless persons.

At the same time, the Conference has demonstrated that a range of challenges continue to cause statelessness and pose obstacles to resolving the situation of stateless persons in Central Asia.

We, the participants of the Regional Conference on Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness and Protection of Stateless Persons in Central Asia, recognize the importance of:



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- Continuing efforts to identify stateless persons, including through population census, surveys and registration campaigns;
- Strengthening cooperation between States to confirm the identify and nationality of specific individuals;
- Ensuring that individuals who lack valid identity documents, including holders of expired USSR passports, are issued with documentation,¹ thereby confirming their legal status in the State;
- Ensuring that all children born on the territory of the State are registered at birth;
- Legal and administrative reform to address provisions and practices which cause statelessness or pose obstacles to the reduction of statelessness in Central Asia, specifically provisions and practices under which:
 - a. Some children born on the territory of the State or to nationals abroad are at risk of statelessness due to lack of adequate legal safeguards to prevent statelessness at birth;
 - b. A citizen is permitted to renounce his/her citizenship without possessing another citizenship, or the assurance of acquiring one;
 - c. Prolonged residence abroad without consular registration can lead to loss of citizenship;
 - d. Stateless persons applying for residence permits or citizenship are required to submit a certificate to confirm they do not possess the nationality of other States with which they have links, without providing for exceptions for situations where the States concerned fail to reply.
- Facilitating acquisition of nationality for stateless persons through simplified procedures, including through reduced residency and documentation requirements and waiving of fees;
- Establishing formal procedures for the determination of statelessness status;
- Granting a legal status, basic rights and identity documentation to stateless persons for an interim period until they are able to acquire a nationality;
- Considering accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

At the close of the Regional Conference, the participants welcomed the upcoming 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It was agreed that progress to address the areas identified above will be reviewed one year after the regional conference.

¹ National passport, passport of a foreign State or identity document for stateless persons,