

## **Agenda Item 2 (b)**

### **69<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee, 28-30 June 2017 Update on the Campaign to End Statelessness**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since June 2015, significant progress has been made towards achieving the goals of the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness. In line with Campaign's "Global Action Plan", the Office has worked to resolve situations of statelessness, promote law reform and accession to the Statelessness Conventions, prevent statelessness through birth registration, and improve the identification of stateless persons.

In 2015 and 2016, over one hundred thousand stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality acquired, or had their nationality confirmed. There have been eight new accessions to the Statelessness Conventions: Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Italy, Belize and Sierra Leone are new States Parties. Law and policy reforms in line with these Conventions have been undertaken in States such as Tajikistan, Norway, Madagascar, Bulgaria, Costa Rica and Turkey.

Regional commitments such as the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017-2024 in West Africa and the growing number of National Actions Plans on statelessness, further illustrate the willingness of an increasing number of States to work towards eradicating statelessness within the timeframe of the Campaign. Collective efforts can still be strengthened to address statelessness through law, policy and administrative reform.

Guaranteeing access to birth registration to prevent statelessness has also remained a vital activity. UNHCR's coordinated regional strategy to ensure that every Syrian refugee child's birth is registered has ensured that 97 percent of Syrian refugee children born in the region have birth documentation. Many other regional initiatives are underway to strengthen civil registration in Africa, Asia and Europe. Sustained advocacy in favour of inclusion of CRVS objectives in development planning will help prevent statelessness.

During the reporting period, UNHCR has contributed to the identification of stateless persons by undertaking and supporting studies in countries as diverse as Austria, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Serbia and Sweden. These activities have allowed the Office to report statistical information on stateless persons in 74 States totalling some 3.2 million individuals worldwide, as well as better identify and respond to protection needs.

UNHCR's activities to address statelessness have all been pursued with a continued focus on strengthening partnerships, providing guidance, and building the capacities of stakeholders. A new "Group of friends" of the Campaign to End Statelessness was launched during the reporting period. It includes some 20 States involved in advocacy and promoting opportunities to address the problem through UN human rights

mechanisms, the sustainable development goals, and processes related to the global compact on refugees. Recent initiatives to engage civil society and UN Agencies have included the establishment of three new regional statelessness networks, and UNHCR's partnership with UNICEF in launching the Coalition on Every Child's Right to Nationality.

Essential to these achievements are the resources placed at UNHCR's disposal. Eight regional statelessness posts continue to strengthen UNHCR's capacity to address statelessness, as well as dedicated positions in country operations and officers deployed under the "Surge protection capacity project". UNHCR also supports statelessness activities through "Seeds for Solutions" and other specialised funds.

However, the statelessness budget has decreased due to resource constraints and in December 2016 UNHCR launched its first-ever special appeal on statelessness for 2017-2018 in the amount of US\$ 47 million. It is hoped that this appeal will draw attention to the financial resources needed to strengthen implementation of UNHCR's statelessness mandate.

In the coming two-year period, UNHCR will seek support of UN Member States to prioritize statelessness in key countries, consistent with the Office's "Strategic directions" (2017-2021). It will also continue to work with UN Member States to link statelessness advocacy efforts to relevant initiatives, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global compact on refugees.

This year marks the first official milestone year of the Campaign. Despite many positive developments, a number of ambitious targets will likely not be met in 2017. Additional support is needed to ensure that we achieve the Campaign's goals and we ask for your continued partnership to accelerate our progress. In order to facilitate this, UNHCR intends to organize a high-level event on statelessness in 2019 where progress can be highlighted and pledges can be made to lend additional momentum to the second half of the global Campaign. Thank you.