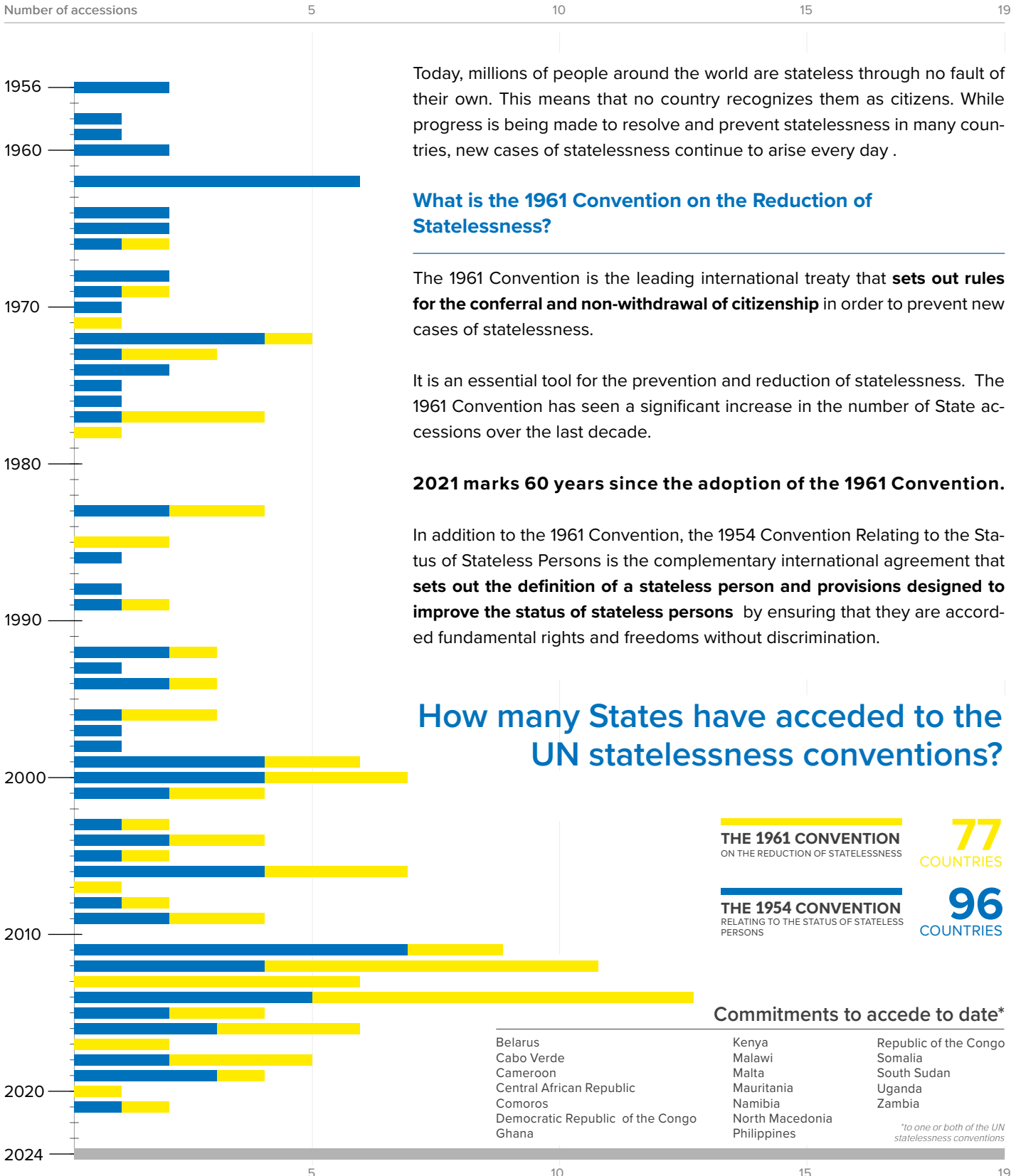




FACT SHEET: THE 1961 CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS

Kyrgyzstan was the first country to confirm citizenship for all people known to be stateless in 2019.

Credit: © UNHCR/ Chris de Bode



Today, millions of people around the world are stateless through no fault of their own. This means that no country recognizes them as citizens. While progress is being made to resolve and prevent statelessness in many countries, new cases of statelessness continue to arise every day .

What is the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness?

The 1961 Convention is the leading international treaty that **sets out rules for the conferral and non-withdrawal of citizenship** in order to prevent new cases of statelessness.

It is an essential tool for the prevention and reduction of statelessness. The 1961 Convention has seen a significant increase in the number of State accessions over the last decade.

2021 marks 60 years since the adoption of the 1961 Convention.

In addition to the 1961 Convention, the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons is the complementary international agreement that **sets out the definition of a stateless person and provisions designed to improve the status of stateless persons** by ensuring that they are accorded fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination.

How many States have acceded to the UN statelessness conventions?

77 COUNTRIES
THE 1961 CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION OF STATELESSNESS

96 COUNTRIES
THE 1954 CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF STATELESS PERSONS

Commitments to accede to date*

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Belarus | Kenya | Republic of the Congo |
| Cabo Verde | Malawi | Somalia |
| Cameroon | Malta | South Sudan |
| Central African Republic | Mauritania | Uganda |
| Comoros | Namibia | Zambia |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | North Macedonia | |
| Ghana | Philippines | |

*to one or both of the UN statelessness conventions

What are the main provisions of the 1961 Convention?

The 1961 Convention includes 10 articles which provide safeguards to be implemented by States in order to prevent and reduce statelessness in four main areas:

1. Measures to avoid statelessness among children
2. Measures to avoid statelessness due to loss or renunciation of nationality
3. Measures to avoid statelessness due to deprivation of nationality
4. Measures to avoid statelessness in the context of State succession

If applied by all States, the safeguards set out in the 1961 Convention would serve to help ensure that no child is born stateless and no adult is rendered stateless, which would ultimately support the eradication of statelessness.

Why is it in States' interest to accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness?

Acceding to the 1961 Convention...

- is a way for States to demonstrate their commitment to human rights and humanitarian standards, including the right to a nationality.
- Enables States to address gaps that result from different approaches to the attribution of nationality worldwide and to apply common safeguards for the avoidance of statelessness, without unduly restricting States' ability to regulate nationality matters.
- Helps prevent displacement by promoting enjoyment of the right to a nationality, and the rights associated with citizenship: access to legal employment, education, health care, to own property and vote, for example.
- Enhances national security and stability by avoiding exclusion and marginalisation resulting from statelessness.
- Promotes the full participation of individuals in society by ensuring access to political rights and processes, and ensuring the unrestricted right to enter and reside in a country, among other rights.

What considerations are involved in acceding to the 1961 Convention?

Acceding to the 1961 Convention implies a commitment to ensure that specific safeguards to promote and protect the right to a nationality are reflected in relevant domestic legislation. This may mean adopting reforms to nationality laws – an undertaking for which UNHCR can provide technical assistance. Thereafter, implementation of the 1961 Convention is neither costly nor labour intensive: for the most part the safeguards are applied automatically, just like many other provisions in nationality laws. No expensive procedures or institutions are required.



Marc Eric is now a citizen of Côte d'Ivoire, after a judicial ruling which gives hope for other foundlings at risk of statelessness.

Credit: © UNHCR/ Mark Henley



The full text of the 1961 Convention and its 10 articles can be found here:

[Convention text](#)



UNHCR's more detailed overview of the substance of the 1961 Convention can be found here:

[Pamphlet](#)