

STATEMENT
by H.E. Mr. Artak Apitonian
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia
at the 70th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme
Geneva, 8 October 2019

Thank you, President.

Distinguished High Commissioner,
Excellencies, Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Refugees, migrants and statelessness are complex phenomena, with legal, ethical, cultural, social and economic dimensions. They are, at the same time, real human experiences, often of suffering and exclusion, of denial of access, opportunity, protection and rejection of individuals' human dignity. Armenia supports the Global Compacts for Refugees and Migrants and Comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) and highly appreciates their inclusiveness, multi-dimensional range of concerns, flexibility for cooperative action and determination of leaving no one behind.

Enforced displacement and migration have been an unfortunate aspect of Armenian realities for more than a century and particularly since the country got its independence. Between 1988 and 1994 hundreds of thousands of Armenians were uprooted as a result of ethnic cleansing in the neighbouring country and found refuge in Armenia. Today their overwhelming majority is well-integrated into our society and enjoy Armenian full citizenship. Armenian Government policies of successful integration was praised by the UNHCR as exemplary in its time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Syrian crisis still remains the source of one of the most acute refugee and displacement cases in the world. Armenian Government has taken an open approach and is offering several protection options as well as a set of benefits to persons

displaced from Syria, which inter alia include accelerated asylum-procedures, facilitated naturalization and residence permits. The Government provides them with durable housing, free medical assistance and scholarships, supports them in setting up businesses. Armenia provides humanitarian assistance to Syria including through its Consulate General that against all odds never ceased its operation in Aleppo. However, international assistance to Syrian refugees in Armenia is indeed modest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In committing to the realization of the ambitious 2030 Agenda, Member States recognized that its goals and targets should be met for all nations and people and for all segments of the society, with a pledge to leave no one behind. Goals such as SDG 3, 4 and others are important for protection of stateless persons, and ensuring that they, like others, have access to their basic needs and full enjoyment of human rights.

Despite the small number of statelessness in Armenia during the high-level meeting in Geneva, back in 2011, the Armenian government committed to revise the national legislation to bring it in line with its international obligations. With UNHCR support, amendments to the Law on Citizenship were adopted and were focused on legal norms governing acquisition and loss of citizenship. Amongst them was the provision for facilitated naturalization of refugees and stateless persons waiving the requirements of three-year legal residence and proven ability of Armenian language skills as well as a guarantee that children born on the territory of Armenia who will otherwise be stateless acquire Armenian citizenship. Moreover, the Law on Stateless Persons has been drafted, setting up the rights and obligations of stateless persons and regulating statelessness determination procedures.

While Armenia is taking necessary legislative and practical measures to eradicate the statelessness in the country, mechanisms for identifying stateless persons and state administrative capacities for the protection of those identified should be further improved. Importance is also attached to the efforts aimed at awareness-raising process on the dangers of statelessness and support to initiatives meant to combat this phenomenon.

Fellow colleagues,

We are very much concerned with the highly increasing forced displacement at the global level. We believe that there is no hierarchy of enforced displacement and both the refugees and IDPs deserve similar care and attention. Massive flow of people will not stop until the root causes of their plight are addressed. Much more must be done to prevent disputes and address protracted conflicts that are driving so many people from their homes.

Armenia reiterates its firm commitment to peaceful resolution of conflicts and pledges to continue to do its utmost to participate in the further construction of security architecture that recognizes the basic and fundamental human values of dignity, social justice and right to nationality.

I thank you.