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70th session of the Executive Committee

Statement by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the High Level Segment on Statelessness and General Debate

10 October 2019

Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is pleased to participate in this High-Level Segment on the UNHCR Executive Committee devoted to statelessness.

The problem of statelessness affects millions of people worldwide, with devastating consequences for their human rights, including their right to liberty, work, health, education, and adequate housing. The conditions that cause statelessness are often rooted in human rights violations as the plight of one group, the Rohingya refugees in their exodus from Myanmar to Bangladesh, has recently demonstrated.

The human rights of stateless individuals is one of the several issues that connects OHCHR and UNHCR. In order to enhance our coordination, a set of joint actions were circulated to staff of our respective organisations in December 2015 to guide our collaboration, including in relation to statelessness.

Last year, the Forum on Minority Issues, which was held on the theme “Stateless: a minority issue” and was guided by the Independent Expert on minority issues, addressed the following issues:

- The root causes and consequences of statelessness affecting minorities;
- statelessness resulting from conflicts, forced population movements and migration affecting minorities-;
- ensuring the right to a nationality for persons belonging to minorities through facilitation of birth registration, naturalization and citizenship for stateless minorities; and
- minority women and children affected by statelessness - advancing gender equality in nationality laws.

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The report on the Forum¹, sets important recommendations based on international law and standards that provide guidance to further implement the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

We have also paid particular attention to the impact of the arbitrary deprivation of nationality on the enjoyment of the rights of children. Our study² on the subject highlighted the fact that statelessness is contrary to the principle of the best interests of the child and that arbitrary deprivation of nationality places children in a situation of increased vulnerability to human rights violations. This is now an ever more acute issue particularly in the context of the measures taken to deprive individuals of nationality in the counter-terrorism context.

Highlighting the human rights dimensions surrounding statelessness, we will continue our efforts in this regard and we commit in particular to:

- 1. Seeking to increase attention on the issue of statelessness in the context of UN human rights bodies and the Universal Periodic Review process.**
- 2. Working jointly with UNHCR to raise awareness about statelessness and its human rights implications and to promote solutions to it. To this end, our Office will organize, together with UNHCR, an event on statelessness and human rights very soon.**
- 3. Continue seeking opportunities for joint advocacy with UNHCR and other forms of collaboration on statelessness, in particular to remove gender discrimination in nationality laws.**

I would like to conclude by linking these commitments to OHCHR work in the context of advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in the context of the Global Refugee Forum. Truly leaving no one behind must include stateless persons and those who are at risk of statelessness. If we ignore the stateless we will be delivering a 2030 Agenda that is neither inclusive nor

¹ A/HRC/40/71

² A/HRC/31/29

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just. Our efforts are focused on the most marginalised and most in need of the international community's assistance.

Our Office wishes UNHCR well with its "I Belong" global campaign to end statelessness by 2024 and stands ready to provide support.

Thank you.