

## Standing Committee 2 July 2024

### Statelessness Update – DIP Director, Elizabeth Tan

#### Introduction

- I am pleased to introduce the Standing Committee update on statelessness. Unlike previous updates that cover a two-year period, this report provides an overview of the progress achieved worldwide towards ending statelessness since the launch of the #IBelong campaign in 2014 and outlines a vision for renewed multi-stakeholder action on statelessness.
- Significant progress has indeed been made to address statelessness since the launch of the #IBelong campaign in 2014. Importantly, 14 States have acceded to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons, 17 States have acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, better legal frameworks to prevent statelessness and to protect stateless persons have been put in place in several countries in all regions. More than half a million stateless persons have been granted nationality.
- Despite these efforts, statelessness remains a persistent global problem. The grant of nationality is a definitive and far-reaching solution, but progress is slow, with some of the largest situations of statelessness seeing limited solutions. And in many contexts, children continue to be born stateless; around half of the countries still lack a key safeguard in their nationality laws to prevent statelessness, namely the safeguard to grant nationality to children born on their territory who would otherwise be stateless. In addition, 24 countries do not allow women to pass on their nationality to their children on an equal basis with men, resulting in statelessness if the child cannot acquire a nationality from their father either.
- Ending statelessness requires political will and leadership from governments. Progress against statelessness also requires seizing the opportunities to address statelessness as a discrimination, human rights and development issue. We need the support of the development partners in these efforts.
- Effective action also requires recognition of the central role of stateless communities and stateless-led organizations. To this end, UNHCR is striving to establish stronger and more institutionalized engagement with people with lived experiences of statelessness. Stateless-led organizations are playing an important role in the establishment of the new Global Alliance.

#### GRF pledges

- One of the clear successes of the #IBelong campaign has been the increased awareness and visibility on the issue and renewed commitment by States. During the high-level segment of the Executive Committee session and the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019, 280 pledges relating to statelessness were submitted by States. Of these, 48 percent have been fully implemented or are in progress. At the Global Refugee Forum in 2023, an additional 135 pledges on statelessness were submitted by 42 States and other stakeholders.
- While in many cases positive action has stemmed from these pledges, the current rate of pledge implementation leaves room for improvement. The political commitment needs to be supported by a clear and actionable plan that identifies priorities for progress and follow-up.

## **Statelessness data**

- Improving data has been one of the key actions under the IBelong campaign. Understanding the scope and causes of statelessness and the risk factors in each context are critical to motivate action and design appropriate responses.
- At the end of 2023, UNHCR reported that 4.4 million people were stateless or of undetermined nationality, but the real figure is widely recognized to be much higher, given the complexities in data collection and relative invisibility of stateless persons in national statistical processes.
- Ten years ago, UNHCR was able to compile statelessness figures from 77 countries in its annual statistical reporting. In 2023, we compiled statelessness figures from 95 countries, which is a 23 percent increase in the number of countries covered. And in some countries, we now have more accurate figures than those that were reported at the beginning of the campaign.
- We now also report on the numbers of stateless persons who are forcibly displaced as part of our statelessness statistics, contributing to a more comprehensive picture of the issue.
- However, over half of the countries still don't report statistics on statelessness and many countries report partial data, representing only some geographic areas or population groups.
- To respond to these challenges, UNHCR, jointly with the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics, supported the development of the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics, which the UN Statistical Commission endorsed in 2023. UNHCR looks forward to working with governments, particularly national statistical offices, and other partners to implement these recommendations.
- In addition to the quantitative data, UNHCR with partners and in collaboration with governments, has undertaken qualitative studies in several countries. The qualitative studies shed light on the causes and consequences of statelessness and provide profiles of the people affected. A critical element is socioeconomic data on statelessness; the few studies on this topic so far – and more are needed to guide action and to bring in development actors – have demonstrated the impact of statelessness on socioeconomic development.

## **The Global Alliance and the high-level segment**

- As a next step, building on the progress made and the lessons learned during the IBelong campaign, we are establishing the Global Alliance to End Statelessness.
- The Global Alliance represents a “whole-of-society approach” to statelessness. It is a multi-stakeholder platform consisting of states, UN agencies, other international organizations, civil society organizations, regional networks and stateless-led organizations. The Alliance will foster greater collaboration and expedited action among relevant actors, including States and stateless individuals.
- We are encouraged by the broad interest in and support for the Alliance already expressed by States and other actors. To date more than 50 States and entities have signed up or committed to joining the Global Alliance, and the numbers are expected to exponentially grow towards the Global Alliance launch.
- The Global Alliance will be launched at the high-level segment on statelessness, which will be held in October this year, as part of the UNHCR Executive Committee session. The high-level segment will be a key moment to reflect on progress made during the 10 years of the IBelong

campaign. The high-level segment will also serve to remobilize the entire international community to transformative action towards ending statelessness.

- I would like to take this opportunity to call on Member States and other stakeholders to join the Global Alliance, to strengthen our collective efforts towards a world without statelessness in which everyone enjoys the right to a nationality without discrimination.