

Remarks of the Director of DIPS, Elizabeth Tan
At 96th meeting of the Standing Committee, 16-18 June 2026
Agenda item 2 (b) – Update on Statelessness, including
The Global Alliance
Tue 16 June
DIPS Director’s Remark

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

Statelessness remains a profound human rights and development challenge. At least 4.5 million people are known to be stateless or of undetermined nationality globally, and millions more are likely affected but are not captured in existing data. Many situations remain protracted, and children continue to be born into statelessness. Behind these figures are people and communities denied the right to nationality and, with it, access to education, healthcare, employment, freedom of movement and full participation in society.

And yet there are encouraging signs of progress. Several States have taken decisive action to resolve long-standing situations. Following a Cabinet Resolution adopted in 2024, Thailand has significantly accelerated procedures, enabling more than 100,000 stateless persons to acquire nationality or permanent residence over the past year. Turkmenistan has resolved all remaining known cases of statelessness in its territory. North Macedonia has become the first country in the Western Balkans to resolve all known cases of statelessness linked to the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

There has also been progress elsewhere. In Syria, Presidential Decree No. 13 of 2026 is enabling eligible members of Kurdish communities who were previously deprived of nationality to acquire Syrian nationality. The Gambia is taking steps to grant nationality to members of the Ghana Town stateless community. In the Dominican Republic, further efforts have been made to streamline administrative processes, and last year hundreds of beneficiaries of Special Law 169-14 who had previously been naturalised were able to complete their documentation process as Dominican nationals.

Targeted measures for specific populations are often the most effective way to resolve statelessness. But prevention is just as

important if we are to reduce statelessness over time and ensure that no child is born stateless. Legal safeguards in line with the 1961 Convention, together with effective implementation, are critical to ensuring that every child can enjoy the right to a nationality. Birth registration, regardless of a child's or parents' nationality or legal status, remains another essential measure. In many situations, it can help prevent statelessness and, in some cases, help resolve it immediately after birth or later in life.

Progress also depends on strong partnerships. The Global Alliance to End Statelessness, launched in 2024, is already helping to bring together States, civil society, affected communities and other partners to advance solutions, share good practice and strengthen coordinated action. The Alliance now has 190 members, including 28 States and 12 regional intergovernmental organisations.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Progress is evident, but the pace remains too slow to break cycles of exclusion. To accelerate results, we will need sustained political will, better data and more inclusive approaches. In this regard, we have worked closely with the World Bank on its new guidance on statelessness-sensitive identification systems, which highlights opportunities to prevent and resolve statelessness as countries roll out new ID systems.

The grant of nationality is a definitive and far-reaching solution. For UNHCR, work on statelessness will be taken forward as part of our broader solutions initiative. In this work, we will continue to prioritise support to States to help accelerate solutions.

Finally, sharply reduced financial resources are severely constraining the capacity of UNHCR and its partners to carry this work forward. Adequate and predictable resources will be critical to sustain momentum and scale up solutions. Without them, progress will slow, with serious consequences for affected populations and for the societies and countries in which they live.