

28 March 2003

Sir (Madam as relevant),

I am writing to bring to your attention an important activity foreshadowed in the *Agenda for Protection* and to request your assistance for my Office accordingly. As you know, the *Agenda for Protection* resulted from UNHCR's *Global Consultations on International Protection*, and was endorsed by UNHCR's Executive Committee and welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly in late 2002. It constitutes a platform for revitalizing the existing international refugee protection regime, while addressing new challenges.

One issue identified in the *Agenda for Protection* for follow-up action is the promotion of more resolute responses to the root causes of refugee movements and involuntary displacement. In this regard, States agreed to give renewed consideration to ratifying the *1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* and the *1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*. My Office was also requested to undertake a survey amongst States on steps they have taken to reduce statelessness and protect stateless persons, and to report to UNHCR's Executive Committee with recommendations for further improving the situation.

UNHCR has a mandate to promote the avoidance and reduction of statelessness globally, including in instances where refugee movements have not arisen. My Office cooperates closely with States in the preparation and implementation of nationality laws that can effectively avoid or resolve instances of statelessness. Addressing the issue of statelessness is one means of preventing displacement and refugee movements. It is also an essential component of implementing durable solutions following displacement.

I would be most grateful if you could complete the attached questionnaire and return it within the requested timeframe. This will help my Office to establish a clear picture of measures taken by States to address the problem of statelessness. This, in turn, will assist in determining how best to strengthen international cooperation to reduce cases of statelessness. Responses to the questionnaire from individual States will be kept confidential. The information gathered will be compiled and reported to the UNHCR Executive Committee in the form of general themes, challenges and concerns. Queries with regard to the questionnaire or to the *Agenda for Protection* may be directed to any UNHCR field office or to the Department of International Protection in Geneva. Contact details are included in the enclosed documentation.

Please accept, Sir (Madam as relevant), the assurances of my highest consideration.

Ruud Lubbers