

**UNHCR Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's
Programme: 70th session, Geneva, 7-11 October 2019**

Thank you, Chair.

New Zealand

High Commissioner, Chair, Distinguished Colleagues,

New Zealand conveys its appreciation for the insightful remarks made by the High Commissioner during this week's opening session.

We join others in reiterating our strong and ongoing support for the work of UNHCR and the High Commissioner.

Chair,

This is a time of unprecedented demand and increasing pressure.

In particular, we are concerned that the Asia and Pacific region is home to 7.7 million people of concern to UNHCR, including an estimated 1.4 million stateless people.

We commend UNHCR's efforts to eradicate statelessness globally by 2024 under the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness.

We also applaud UNHCR's work in the Asia-Pacific region on the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children on the right to a nationality.

For our global efforts to protect vulnerable people to succeed, we must ensure *all* persons of concern are afforded adequate protection.

That includes vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, disabled and persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

Chair,

New Zealand remains committed to working with UNHCR and the international community in search for durable protection solutions for the most vulnerable people.

We share the concerns expressed in the report released by UNHCR, UNICEF and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights that gender discriminatory nationality laws remain a root cause of global childhood statelessness.

We urge those countries that still retain gender discriminatory nationality laws to take urgent action to enact reforms. Nationality laws must uphold women and men's equal rights to confer nationality on their children.

This right is enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Also, the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that all children enjoy the right to acquire a nationality at birth, without discrimination on the basis of the parent's sex. Virtually all countries are bound by this Convention.

Chair,

New Zealand remains committed to upholding the principle under Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that everyone has the right to a nationality.

For our part, New Zealand is committed to preventing statelessness and contributing to the reduction of statelessness.

We are also confident about our ability to respond to challenges under our current immigration and refugee mechanisms.

New Zealand is a party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

And earlier this year we committed to examine whether we should formally accede to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. We will do this before our next Universal Periodic Review by the Human Rights Council in 2023.

In closing, New Zealand applauds the High Commissioner and all of the staff in UNHCR for your committed and courageous service to the world's refugees, internally displaced and other persons of concern.

Thank you.

