

GAMBIA

STATEMENT OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF THE
INTERIOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA ON THE FIRST
REGIONAL MINISTERIAL LEVEL CONFERENCE ON
STATELESSNESS OF ECOWAS MEMBER STATES, ABIDJAN, IVORY
COAST, 25TH FEBRUARY 2015

Your Excellencies

Distinguish Ladies and gentlemen

I welcome the organizers of this conference dedicated to this very important issue of statelessness and I congratulate the UNHCR and the ECOWAS COMMISSION and for this initiative and the Government and People of Cote d'ivoire for hosting this conference. I trust that our meeting today would produce an outcome.

Your Excellencies

Distinguish Ladies and gentlemen

Nationality is one of the keys to full participation in society and decision - making to accessing a wide range of rights. The whole society is build around the special tie between the state and its citizens. When this protective tie does not exist or it is curtailed, the consequences are very often marginalization and exclusion for the affected persons.

In a nutshell, statelessness is a lack of protection, dignity and identity. It prevents people from fulfilling their potential as they fail to exercise fundamental human rights guaranteed by a specific constitutional framework, especially political rights.

Your Excellencies

Distinguish Ladies and gentlemen

The international treaty regime has been developed to address the problems of statelessness, including most notably the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

The 1954 Convention regulates the status of non-refugee stateless persons and ensures that they enjoy fundamental rights without discrimination, while the 1961 Convention sets out obligations on States to eliminate and prevent statelessness in nationality laws and practices.

As part of our commitment to uphold international law and advance the international standards of protection in the humanitarian field, the Republic of The Gambia ratified the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 2014 and the Instrument of ratification deposit in Geneva in 2014.

Your Excellencies

Distinguish Ladies and gentlemen

During the last years, the Gambian authorities have strived to give substance to our contribution in the humanitarian field, by offering protection refugees and other vulnerable groups. We hosted and continue to host refugees from the sub region and beyond. Moreover, the country has become a state of resettlement for some refugees. In addition, the Government has also set up in 2008 the Gambia Commission for Refugees to coordinate policies, programmes and projects relating to refugee managements.

activities to raise awareness on the dangers of statelessness and to come up with initiatives meant to combat this phenomenon. A National Action Plan has also been developed with other relevant stakeholders which should be part of the global campaign to eradicate statelessness..

Your Excellencies

Distinguish Ladies and gentlemen

Citizenship is important to have a decent human life. The international community has made important efforts to protect the rights of stateless persons but progress toward ending this problem is limited. We all need to do a better job to close the gap that still exists between discourse and reality.

I wish to take this opportunity to assure UNHCR and partners that The Gambia will remain a resolute and dependable partner in protecting refugees and other vulnerable groups. We join the calls of the UNHCR in promoting wide accession to these legal instruments, as we believe they are valuable tools in the protection of stateless persons, tackling statelessness can only be achieved through international cooperation with the view to gradually build a system of common rules. I cannot conclude without acknowledging the efforts of UN Agencies in The Gambia particularly UNHCR, who are actively supporting the Government efforts in preventing statelessness in the Country.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION