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Intergovernmental Event at the Ministerial Level of Member States of the United Nations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness

Geneva, 7-8 December 2011 PM



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF IRELAND

H.E. Mr. Gerard Corr

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geneva

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to take the floor at this intergovernmental event on behalf of Ireland. My delegation fully associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the distinguished Under-Secretary of State of Poland on behalf of the European Union.

Ireland is pleased to join today with other Member States of the United Nations in commemorating the adoption of the 1951 and 1961 Conventions. Ireland acceded to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees in 1956, and to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 1973.

The anniversaries that we mark today provide an extremely valuable opportunity to assess the impact of those conventions and to affirm their continuing relevance.

Ireland is fully committed to the 1951 Convention, and to the promotion of its universal adoption.

Guided by its principles, we have worked recently to further refine our practices in the area of asylum and to comprehensively reform and simplify our refugee status determination process through the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010, which is currently before the Irish parliament. This bill proposes the introduction of a single procedure for the investigation of all grounds for protection and any other reasons which an applicant presents for seeking to remain in the State, removing the sequential processes associated with the existing system and allowing an applicant to receive a final decision in a more efficient and timely manner. This is an outcome which can only be in the interests of the applicant and indeed the integrity of the refugee status determination process. **Accordingly, today the Government of Ireland pledges to introduce a single protection procedure through the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010, to determine applications for protection and other reasons to remain in the State.**

I wish to acknowledge the considerable input made by UNHCR to discussions on this legislation, and indeed, UNHCR's central involvement over many years in training and human resource development at relevant Government offices in Ireland. We look forward to the continuation of that involvement as Ireland prepares for the implementation of the new legislation.

Ireland is fully committed to the implementation of its obligations as a party to both the 1954 and 1961 statelessness conventions. Our most recent legislation in this area, the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 2004, was designed to ensure continued consistency of Irish citizenship law with the State's international commitments.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention, we add our voice to calls for those states which have not yet become parties to this instrument to consider doing so, as a signal of their commitment to giving full effect to the recognition in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that "everyone has the right to a nationality".

Mr. Chairman,

Ireland is fully cognisant of the need to work, in particular in the context of protracted refugee crises, towards the provision of durable solutions which recognise the legitimate aspirations of refugees themselves. One of the manifestations of Ireland's commitment to international solidarity in this area comes through the operation of our national resettlement programme, in partnership with UNHCR. This programme has allowed us to play a part in facilitating solutions for refugees displaced by both protracted and acute crises, including a number requiring resettlement as a result of the crisis in North Africa earlier this year. ***Today, the Government of Ireland pledges to continue to operate a UNHCR-led resettlement programme for programme refugees.***

We are also conscious of the new challenges posed by evolving patterns of displacement arising from emerging global trends. Ireland recognises the need for reflection on how these challenges can best be addressed by the international community, in order to ensure that the global response to the needs of displaced persons is fair, humane and consistent.

Mr. Chairman,

Ireland thanks and commends the High Commissioner for his initiative in convening this meeting. We remain committed to providing strong support to UNHCR as it works to carry out its unique and important mandate. Today, millions of people worldwide require the protections afforded by the 1951 Convention; millions more remain stateless. It is a challenge for us all to perceive the needs and vulnerabilities of so many people, and to play our part in preserving the fundamental rights and human dignity of each individual. The 1951 and 1961 Conventions provide the framework for our collective efforts. Ireland is glad to restate its enduring commitment to these valuable and historic instruments.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.