



**Intergovernmental Event at the Ministerial Level of Member States
of the United Nations on the Occasion of the 60th Anniversary
of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and the 50th Anniversary
of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness**

**Palais des Nations
Geneva**

STATEMENT

By

**DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE**

H.E. MRS EBUN ADEBOLA JUSU

Geneva, 7-8 December 2011

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STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. MRS. EBUN A. JUSU, DEPUTY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE 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, SWITZERLAND
7TH TO 8TH DECEMBER, 2011

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am gratified to be among other participants to commemorate 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. We appreciate that a lot of people are forced to leave their countries of origin for a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons such as racial discrimination, religious intolerance, divergence in political opinion, to name but a few. Other factors may also warrant people to voluntarily move to other countries where their

immigration statuses cannot be recognized by the host governments. These two categories are considered as Refugees and Stateless Persons. They find themselves in a very precarious situation and therefore need protection.

In most cases, the underlying reasons for refugee movements from one place to another relate to violations of internationally recognized human rights. Whatever may be the causes for people fleeing their country, it is usually connected to threat to their lives and liberty.

In this regard, I would like to draw your kind attention to Articles 14 and 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which guarantee the right of persons to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution and assurance of nationality. The 1948 Universal

Declaration also validates the movement of persons from one country to another to seek asylum.

It is also important to note that refugees represent a small percentage of the worldwide movement of people who in many cases migrate from one country or continent to another alongside other people whose reasons for moving are different and not protection-related. More often than not, such movements are illegal and do not involve the obligatory traveling documentation, and they therefore pose a security threat to the receiving states.

The manner in which refugees are treated in the country of asylum raises many human rights questions, such as arbitrary detention, protection of family life and protection against racism and discrimination.

With regard to statelessness, all persons who fall under this category must be given the right to claim nationality in the countries that they find themselves. On the converse, the presence of stateless persons is usually not welcomed by residents who may even see them as potentially a social and economic threat. It is in this regard that I am calling on all State Parties to these Conventions to do everything humanly possible to reduce, if not prevent the threat posed by illegal migrants.

Even though the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness provides a tool for avoiding and resolving cases of statelessness, State Parties to this Convention should endeavour to ensure that protective measures are put in place to subside and thwart statelessness.

It is pertinent to note that nationality is a legal bond between people and state which provides them with a sense of identity and belonging. In this vein, a stateless person is deprived of making decisions of public concern. He/she is also denied the political right to vote and be voted for. Accession to the 1961 Convention equip states to avoid and resolve nationality-related disputes and synergize national support to adequately deal with the prevention and reduction of statelessness.

CONCRETE PLEDGES OF ACTION

Sierra Leone is one of the countries that have over the years strived to grant citizenship to persons within our countries, especially refugees.

The revised 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone relating to citizenship qualifies Sierra Leoneans who

have obtained different nationalities in the Diaspora to hold a Sierra Leone passport. This is in accordance with the Dual Citizen Act of 2006

Also, persons born to foreign national (s), married to Sierra Leonean (s), residing in the country for a period exceeding 15 years or have investment (s) are granted citizenship on submission of their application to the competent Sierra Leonean authorities.

I thank you for your attention.