

The Campaign to End Statelessness

July 2017 Update



#IBelong

Join us in our Campaign to End Statelessness



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Mobilizing governments and civil society

The Inter-Parliamentary Union's 136th Assembly was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 1-5 April. A ["Communiqué on redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all"](#) was adopted by the Assembly, making reference to the deep concern "that refugees, stateless persons and migrants are a large group which is particularly vulnerable to inequality, discrimination and violence" and encouraging Parliamentarians to address these issues. The [IPU's Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law made recommendations](#) on how parliamentarians could contribute to achieving the Campaign's goals.

The European Parliament adopted a report ["Addressing refugee and migrant movements: the role of the EU external action service"](#) on 5 April. In this report, the Parliament recognises statelessness as a significant human rights challenge and asks the Commission and the European Union External Action Service to fight statelessness in all EU external action, particularly given that statelessness is a major cause of forced displacement.

On 6 April, the Department of International Law (Secretariat for Legal Affairs) of the Organization of American States (OAS), in its capacity as Technical Secretariat for the Inter American Juridical Committee (IAJC), presented the ["Guide for the protection of stateless persons"](#) to the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs of the Permanent Council of the OAS. In the Guide, the IAJC urges Member States to: accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions; support the ["Draft articles on protecting and facilitating the naturalization of stateless persons"](#); and develop an effective procedure for the protection of stateless persons.

On 4-5 May, the European Network on Statelessness (ENS) held a [regional conference](#) in Budapest with the support of UNHCR to launch its report ["Protecting stateless persons from arbitrary detention: An agenda for change"](#) and to promote region-wide advocacy aimed at protecting stateless persons from arbitrary detention. The Conference was attended by government officials, lawyers, NGO representatives, UNHCR, ENS Youth Ambassadors, representatives of the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and IOM.



NGO Statelessness Retreat, Switzerland. © UNHCR/ L. Haap

On 9 May, two years after the adoption of the Abidjan Declaration, the ECOWAS Ministers responsible for nationality issues validated the **“Banjul Plan of Action on the eradication of statelessness in West Africa”** during a regional **meeting in The Gambia**. The Banjul Plan of Action sets out concrete measures to end statelessness by 2024 and is legally binding on all the Member States.

On 19 May, the Civil Society Network on Statelessness for Central Asia met in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to launch their **website** and discuss future plans of action. The launch was well attended by NGOs and academia engaged in statelessness issues in all five Central Asian countries. There were discussions on the technical assistance required to resolve stateless situations in Central Asia, including the situation of stateless individuals from Donetsk and Lugansk in Ukraine, and the drafting of a joint petition concerning newly adopted Constitutional changes in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on deprivation of citizenship.

UNHCR supported the development of a module on refugees, IDPs, and stateless persons for a new **eLearning course on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)**. The course was developed through collaboration between the World Bank Group, the Global CRVS Group, and a number of other partners. The eLearning course was launched on 22-23 May at a high-level event held in Seoul, Republic of Korea. Those interested in building their capacity on CRVS can do so by **registering for the Open Learning Campus** and then **enrolling in the first self-paced core course**, which is free. The full facilitated course guided by global experts will be launched in September and will include the module on refugees, IDPs and stateless persons.

In June, UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice in Benin brought together actors involved in the fight against statelessness to take stock of the implementation of the National Plan of Action and develop new strategies in light of the recent adoption of the regional Banjul Plan of Action.

On 11-13 June, UNHCR convened its annual NGO statelessness retreat in Switzerland. Representatives of 25 organizations working on statelessness attended to discuss the #IBelong Campaign’s 2017 theme of equal nationality rights and stateless minorities; the Coalition on Every Child’s Right to a Nationality; the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; and a high-level meeting on statelessness envisaged for 2019.



UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Volker Türk, supporting the #IBelong Campaign at the ministerial meeting in Banjul, The Gambia. © UNHCR/ S. Diéné

On 20 June, the General Assembly of the OAS adopted **a resolution for the promotion and protection of human rights**. The resolution urges States to: reaffirm commitments to eradicating statelessness in the Americas; continue to move forward with implementing

the actions proposed in the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014-2024 and in the Brazil Plan of Action of 2014; and support the global #IBelong campaign to eliminate statelessness by 2024 led by UNHCR.

UNHCR held a workshop on 20-22 June in Sierra Leone to engage relevant stakeholders, including the Government of Sierra Leone parliamentarians and civil society, in developing a National Plan of Action as recommended in the Abidjan Declaration.

A regional workshop was co-convened by UNHCR and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) (12 states members) on 27-28 June. A Draft Declaration of Technical Experts of ICGLR Member States on the Eradication of Statelessness was adopted, as well as a regional plan of action. This Draft Declaration will be submitted to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of ICGLR Member States and, once endorsed, will become an ICGLR Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness.

On 29 June, the European Parliament's LIBE and Petitions Committee organized a joint [hearing](#) on statelessness following the submission of two petitions on statelessness by ENS to the European Parliament and the 2015 study "[Practices and approaches by EU Member States to prevent and end statelessness](#)". ENS, the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI), UNHCR and UNICEF all made advocacy presentations to the



ICGLR conference participants. © UNHCR/ P. Bakombe

Committee. You can [watch the full VoxBox debate](#) with Cecilia Wikström and Claude Moræs (Members of the European Parliament), Chris Nash (Director of ENS) and Melanie Khanna (Chief of Statelessness Section, UNHCR).

Implementation of the Global Action Plan

With respect to **Action 1 (Resolve existing major situations of statelessness)**, in Guinea, the National Plan of Action for the Eradication of Statelessness was officially adopted by presidential decree on 21 April.

Also in line with Action 1, on 23 April, the Prime Minister of Malaysia launched the [Malaysian Indian Blueprint](#), which contains a target to resolve stateless and documentation issues for persons of Indian descent living in Malaysia within five years, with priority given to children and youth.

In line with **Action 3 (Remove gender-discrimination from nationality laws)**, in April, the Sudanese Ministry of Interior implemented a Constitutional Court decision authorizing issuance of nationality documents to six children of a Sudanese mother and South Sudanese father. This is an important precedent that will positively affect the practice of judicial and executive organs in relation to the nationality of individuals born to Sudanese mothers and South Sudanese fathers.

On 8 May, an [amendment to the Madagascan nationality law that gives men and women equal rights](#) to pass on nationality to their children was published in the

Official Journal of the Republic of Madagascar (dated 27 February). With this promulgation the law formally entered into force.

On 5 July, Sierra Leone [amended its Citizenship Act](#) guaranteeing women and men the equal right to confer nationality on children.

On **Action 5 (Prevent statelessness in cases of State succession)**, UNHCR organized two workshops on statelessness for government actors in Burkina Faso from regions affected by territorial disputes (with Mali and Niger) where there is a high risk of statelessness. Participants elaborated strategies to prevent statelessness.

With regard to **Action 6 (Grant Protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization)**, on 23 May, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation issued a ground-breaking decision in the [case of Noe Mskhiladze](#), a stateless person in detention awaiting expulsion. The Court ruled that stateless persons should have the possibility of challenging the legality of their detention.

day festival organized on Senegal's Independence Day. The event's theme was citizenship. The group's commitment to this cause was carried forward through the organization of a discussion panel, the management of an [awareness-raising stand](#), and the interpretation of the [#IBelong song](#).

[Stories of stateless persons in France](#) are now available in French on the #IBelong website. They shed light on the life of four formerly stateless individuals and their families in France.

A new [#IBelong campaign video](#) highlights the Royal Thai Government's commitment to addressing statelessness and how Government, UNHCR and civil society can work together to solve statelessness. It features interviews with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, UNHCR's Representative to Thailand and two formerly stateless students who have acquired Thai nationality.

Upcoming Events

On 31 July to 4 August, Tilburg University will be hosting its [2017 statelessness course](#). The course aims to provide participants with new knowledge, tools and skills to address statelessness and enforce the right to nationality.

The World Council of Churches will be holding a "Regional Conference on Statelessness in the European context: Prevention, reduction and protection" on 4-5 September in Berlin, Germany. The event will bring together member churches to raise awareness about statelessness in Europe and discuss how member churches can contribute to the goals of the #IBelong Campaign.



Campaign Resources

Want to support the Campaign? Take a look at our [#IBelong website](#) and post a digital banner on your website, mobilize your social media contacts by sharing one of our posts, download and post our Twitter cards or embed a short video that explains statelessness. Videos, photo essays and web stories can be found on our [#IBelong stories page](#). Legal resources are available on [Refworld](#).

Learn More About Statelessness

Learning about statelessness is fun and easy. Take advantage of our [self-study module](#) from the comfort of your armchair!



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