

Seventieth (70th) Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (ExCom)

Protocol

Mr Chair, The Deputy Secretary General, His Excellency the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen: I would like to commend the efforts of the High Commissioner and the UNHCR Team so far towards the protection of refugees and stateless persons globally.

Let me start by saying, that I align myself with the statement of the Africa Group delivered by my Zimbabwean brother.

It is a pleasure to be back here today at the forum and on behalf of the Nigerian Government join many others on the I- Belong Campaign to End Statelessness.

Last year, I was here as the Federal Commissioner, National Commission for Refugees of Nigeria and today, I am happy to serve in the Cabinet of President Muhammadu Buhari, as a Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, heading the newly created and robust Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development. This new ministry reflects recent reforms to create a coordinated and sustainable humanitarian and development framework, which is will expand on shortly.

Overview of Statelessness in Nigeria

Statelessness is not a new issue to Nigeria. In 2002, the ruling of the International Court of Justice

ceding Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon, left inhabitants of the Peninsula uncertain about their citizenship status. Subsequently, the Boko Haram insurgency which took a violent toll in 2009 and led to the mass displacement of persons and refugees has created another group of persons at risk of statelessness. This includes children born in displaced settings, and children of abducted girls and women. Nigeria ratified the 1954 Convention Related to Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness on September 20th, 2011. Subsequently, Nigeria signed the Abidjan Declaration on the Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness in ECOWAS member states, which led to the development of a National Action Plan to Eradicate Statelessness in Nigeria.

Pledges

It is under this context that national stakeholders held consultations to create the following commitments and pledges to end statelessness in Nigeria. The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has endorsed 5 pledges. As such, Nigeria pledges as follows:

1. That by 2020, Nigeria commits to introduce regulations for the registration of offspring of naturalised citizens as Nigerians.
2. By 2020, Nigeria commits to establishing a Statelessness Determination Procedure to identify stateless persons, grant protection status and facilitate appropriate solutions
3. By mid-2021, Nigeria commits to publishing a qualitative study, with a view to finding solutions
4. By 2024, scale up issuance of birth registration and national identity numbers, including to IDPs, refugees and

returnees, thereby providing civil registration and documentation to reduce risk of statelessness.

5. By 2024, Nigeria commits to undertake law reforms on registration of children born on Nigerian Territory who would otherwise be stateless and children under 10 years of unknown origin; as well as equality for spouse on the acquisition, change and retention of nationality upon civil registration. These legal reforms will therefore ensure no child is born stateless and gender discrimination are removed from nationality laws.

Nigeria's Best Practice on Statelessness via the National Action Plan to Eradicate Statelessness in Nigeria

The National Action Plan provides short, medium- and long-term goals as well as measurable milestones to end statelessness. It recognizes the linkages between the eradication of statelessness and national development agenda, and calls on all stakeholders: from government ministries, departments and agencies, international partners in Nigeria, as well as civil society to engage and collaborate efforts at the federal, state and local levels. The plan prioritizes 5 key areas that are being deployed to end statelessness in the country.

This includes:

1. engaging in research, advocacy and sensitization on the root causes of statelessness and the rights of stateless persons;
2. preventing childhood statelessness by creating regulations and supporting ongoing registration efforts
3. addressing statelessness caused by the land transfer to Cameroon by providing resettlement and reintegration solutions to person of concern

4. addressing gender and other forms of discrimination by also adopting regulations
5. and finally, ensuring protection of stateless persons and migrants.

Evidently, Nigeria's National Action plan adopts international best practices and we are seeking further partnerships to ensure its implementation. The Plan has undergone additional technical reviews and will be resubmitted to the Federal execution Council for validation. Ladies and Gentlemen, Nigeria too, is determined to end statelessness by developing regulations to eliminate gender-based discrimination; by supporting on-going efforts for the registration of citizens (including child birth registration); as well as collecting reliable data that will inform documentation and the delivery of quality services that ensure access to basic welfare services to stateless persons.

There are various Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) of Government in Nigeria already facilitating and executing these activities to end statelessness, as it relates to their mandate. For instance, the Ministry of Justice and Interior are involved in the law reforms and the issuance of documents respectively. The National Identify Management Commission (NIMC) is also engaged in issuing National ID cards; while the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) provides protection and is in the process of developing a Statelessness Determination Procedure.

Update on Nigeria's achievements on the Protection of Refugees and IDPs:

Mr. Chair, Ladies and gentlemen, Nigeria's experience with coordination of the protection of refugees and the provision of durable solutions has been heavily influenced by the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees. Let me use this opportunity to commend UNHCR on building a robust instrument that is currently supporting our work at the national level.

Nigeria's response has particularly been challenging, given the protracted nature of the conflicts and environmental factors that have led to mass displacement both internally and externally. Moreover, mass displacement has also given rise to the risk of statelessness. As such, the government, through the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Person (NCFRMI) has tailored its response towards skill acquisition and empowerment to ensure that Refugees are self-reliant and are active participants.

The Nigerian Immigration Service in collaboration with the National Commission for Refugee have issued approximately 162 Conventional Travel Documents (CTD) for refugees in Nigeria. Distribution of CTDs is on-going to ensure all refugees are covered. The CTD enables refugees living in Nigeria, to travel outside the country; thereby providing better protection of refugees and enabling refugees to exercise their right to free movement and to seek asylum in any country. Earlier this year, Nigeria returned its first batch of Refugees from in Cameroon. This batch consisted of approximately 130 refugees who have now been resettled in already stable and rebuilt communities in Yola, Adamawa State.

The New Humanitarian Framework:

It may also interest you to know that Nigeria has reorganized and developed a new humanitarian framework that seeks to operationalize and accomplish a nexus between humanitarianism and development. The new Federal Ministry of Humanitarian affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development shall enhance coordination of all humanitarian and social interventions in the country as well as strengthen existing framework and capacity of stakeholders to provide suitable and holistic social protection from the onset of crises to development. This new humanitarian architecture will have greater impact on recovery efforts through the provision of durable solutions to the poor, disabled, women and children, and vulnerable migrants including stateless person. The Ministry will provide a supervisory role for the National Commission for Refugees by focusing on coordination.

The role of the new ministry in combatting statelessness will include:

1. engaging research, education and sensitization of the general public on statelessness
2. supporting efforts towards adopting regulations and issuing documentation for persons of concern
3. and finally, employing coordination for the protection and durable solution efforts for person of concerns and developing partnership and collaboration with both national and international stakeholders.

Thank you for your attention.