



**Regional Ministerial Level Meeting for the Validation and
Adoption of a Regional Plan of Action to Eradicate
Statelessness in West Africa**

**Statement Delivered
By
Cllr. Frederick Cherue
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
of the
Republic of Liberia**

May 9, 2017

- His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, President of the Gambia
- Hon. Mai Ahmad Fatty, Minister of Interior of the Gambia
- His Excellency Mr. Marcel de Souza, President of the Commission of ECOWAS
- His Excellency Mr. Volker Turk, Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees for UNHCR
- His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General for West Africa
- H. E. Makhtar Diop, Vice President for Africa of the World Bank
- Cabinet Ministers of ECOWAS Countries and other High level Representatives of Governments
- Experts of various Countries , Civil society institutions, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is an honor to participate in this Regional Ministerial Level Meeting for the Validation and Adoption of a Regional Plan of Action to Eradicate Statelessness in West Africa and to provide updates on the current status of Liberia with regard to statelessness since the coming to effect of the Abidjan Declaration in 2015. I bring you greetings from the Government and Peace Loving People of Liberia, the President of the Republic of Liberia and Chair Person of ECOWAS, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf congratulates you for organizing and conducting this important meeting.

The Government of the Republic of Liberia Highly supports the initiative to eradicate statelessness in West Africa owing to the fact that this Sub Region has endured humanitarian catastrophe marred by war, epidemic, extremism, terrorism, etc. That is why In February 2015, the Government of Liberia vigorously participated during the formulation and adoption of the Abidjan Declaration from start to finish. We are all aware of the numerous challenges Government and humanitarian actors meet head-on especially in hot spot zones where inhumane activities are on the rise daily,

yet it is the responsibility of all of us to remain steadfast in support of ECOWAS and the UN initiative through UNHCR for their timely and unabated intervention in providing assistance to all persons of concern. These humanitarian ventures have often been performed under the most difficult circumstances.

Mr. Chairman,

Since our participation in the statelessness conference in February 2015, which fashioned the Abidjan Declaration, many efforts have been made in the prevention and eradication of statelessness in Liberia. Events occurring during the latter period of 2016 have led to an even greater collaboration among the Offices of ECOWAS, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of Liberia. For this reason, LIBERIA has demonstrated in practical terms its readiness to eradicate statelessness by committing to the following :

- The Government of Liberia has established the National Identification Registry which will shortly start a National Identification registration process across the country for citizens and residents of Liberia. This Process will help to Identify and establish the status of people in Liberia which will assist with a database of stateless person and at the same time help prevent statelessness through registration of people.
- In 2017, Continuous consultation is being made with members of the National Legislature on the enactment of the draft amended Refugee Act which made provision for stateless persons. A retreat is being planned to facilitate public hearing and revision of the document with that august body.
- Stakeholders meetings and review of the Alien and Nationality Law have been held with an amended draft presented to the Law Reform Commission for legal compliance and onward submission to the National Legislature no later than this year(2017).
- We have increase our awareness campaign on statelessness to educational institutions, religious institutions, the general public etc. through the print and electronic media, programs commemorating

the "I Belong Campaign" and "Abidjan Declaration", and other medium.

- Early 2015, a stakeholder meeting was held with Members of Liberia's National Legislature, including some Government's Ministry and Agencies, to include: the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission, Civil Society and National Youth and Student Institutions. At the close of the meeting, A joint communiqué was endorsed followed by a draft National Action Plan for the Government of Liberia to make the issue of Statelessness as part of her national priority.
- In May 2015, a Mini Retreat was held with members of the Liberian Legislative Committee on Refugees and other persons of concern, to Brief that body on the current amended Draft Refugee Act to include provision on stateless persons. A special presentation was made on statelessness intended to provide information for the members present .
- In August 2016, negotiations were made with the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Liberia National Police on the inclusion into their training package presentation on Refugees Law and statelessness. This will enable Immigration and Police officers abreast with the issue of protection which will minimize violations.

With this achievement, we hope before the close of 2017 to complete the following:

1. Ensure that the Government of Liberia Endorse the research done on statelessness in Liberia through a national validation process .
2. Make operational the Current Draft National Statelessness Action Plan. We are hoping to equip ourselves with information on the modalities and processes in achieving this objective.
3. Continue to engage the National Legislature on the passage into Law the current Draft amended Refugee Law which have expanded provision for Stateless Persons in Liberia

4. Continue working with the Law Reform Commission and the Law Makers for the speedy review and passage of the Alien and Nationality Law.