

UN Key Messages on Statelessness

The way forward: stronger UN advocacy ahead of a 2019 High-Level Event on Ending Statelessness

The problem of statelessness affects millions of people worldwide, with devastating consequences that deprive them of legal rights or basic services, leaving them politically and economically marginalized, discriminated against, and particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The conditions causing statelessness can also give rise to large-scale violence and displacement, as the mass exodus of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh has demonstrated.

An inclusive and just 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that truly leaves no one behind must include stateless persons and those who are at risk of statelessness. In order to take the UN's experience in addressing statelessness to scale across the UN system, the Secretary-General has updated his Guidance Note and issued a set of Key Messages (below) for UN entities to take joint and decisive action.

Achievements made by States in addressing statelessness will be showcased at an October 2019 high-level event in Geneva where States will be asked to pledge concrete actions that will lead to substantial results by 2024.¹ UN entities are asked to advocate with States toward tangible progress and firm pledges. This advocacy should include coordinated UNCT efforts at the field level as well as a strong Headquarters voice, drawing on the messages below.

Key Messages (General)

- Ending statelessness worldwide is an ambitious but achievable goal with strong momentum behind it. UNHCR has launched a Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024 (#IBelong Campaign), and with UNICEF, has formed a Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality. For more information about the #IBelong Campaign, see <http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>.
- The human impact of statelessness is severe. While the enjoyment of most human rights should not be dependent upon having a nationality, in reality, without any nationality, stateless persons typically are not able to enjoy basic rights. Statelessness affects socio-economic rights such as education, employment, social welfare, housing and healthcare, as well as civil and political rights such as freedom of movement, freedom from arbitrary detention, and political participation. For helpful basic information about statelessness, see ***What is Statelessness***, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5829c3514.html>.
- Statelessness is a women's and children's rights issue. Gender discrimination in nationality laws that makes it difficult or impossible for mothers to confer nationality to their children negatively affects mothers as well as their children's right to a nationality. All children have a right to a legal identity and to full belonging. For more information about how statelessness affects children and their families, see ***I am Here, I Belong: The Urgent Need to End Childhood Statelessness***, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/563368b34.html>.
- Statelessness is a youth issue. Without a nationality, and the legal rights associated with it, youth are particularly susceptible to forced/unpaid labor, trafficking, forced/early marriage and other forms of exploitation. The specific ways in which statelessness affects young people should be considered when data is gathered, issues are analysed, and policies are developed.

¹ Regional consultations envisioned to be held in the run-up to the 2019 High Level Event may provide opportunities for senior leadership engagement.

- Statelessness is a minority rights issue. A disproportionate number of the world's stateless population are members of a minority group. For stateless minorities, statelessness tends to perpetuate and worsen the discrimination and marginalization they already face. For more information, see ***This is our Home: Stateless Minorities and their Search for Citizenship***, available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/59e4a6534.html>.
- Statelessness is a development issue. When thousands of people are stateless, the result is communities that are alienated and marginalized, and whose development potential is severely undermined. The promise contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that “no one will be left behind” cannot be realized unless all persons are recognized as full members of society. SDG 16.9 calls for States to ensure that *all persons* have a legal identity, including birth registration, by 2030. For more information about statelessness and the SDGs, as well as every child's right to birth registration, a name, and nationality, see ***The Sustainable Development Goals and Addressing Statelessness*** at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/58b6e3364.html>, and <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration/>.
- Statelessness is a peace and security issue. Unresolved statelessness can lead to conflict and threats to security and stability, within and across borders. Counter-terrorism concerns can be used as a pretext for depriving political opponents or dissidents of nationality.
- Addressing statelessness requires reliable data. Improving reliability of global estimates and conducting joint research will reinforce efforts to develop international standards and improve national capacity for data collection and analysis with data protections that avoid putting marginalized and vulnerable populations at greater risk. The 2020 round of population censuses and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration provide important opportunities for improving data collection on the extent of statelessness and the characteristics of stateless persons.

Key Messages (Advocating for pledges at the 2019 High-Level Event in Geneva)

- Ending statelessness is achievable. There is strong momentum and all governments have the opportunity to contribute to this important goal by making firm pledges at the High-Level Event on Statelessness in Geneva in October 2019 to mark the mid-way point of the #IBelong Campaign.
- All States that have not yet done so are encouraged to accede to the Statelessness Conventions or to consider making time-bound pledges to do so at the 2019 High-Level Event. For information on States that are currently Party to the Statelessness Conventions, see https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-3&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&clang=en for States Parties to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=V-4&chapter=5&clang=en for States Parties to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. For good practices with respect to accession to the statelessness conventions, see <http://www.refworld.org/docid/553f617f4.html>.
- States with existing protracted situations of statelessness are encouraged to take steps to accelerate resolution. For publicly available data on existing large stateless populations, see UNHCR's statistical reporting, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>. For good practices with respect to the resolution of statelessness in specific situations, see <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54e75a244.html>.

- All States are encouraged to work with UN human rights mechanisms and partners to ensure timely implementation of supported recommendations relating to statelessness received through UN human rights mechanisms, including Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and to use these mechanisms more broadly. For additional information on the UPR and statelessness, see <https://www.upr-info.org/database/> and search by “statelessness.” For an overview of recommendations by human rights mechanisms related to statelessness, please see the [Universal Human Rights Index](#), and search under Theme G7 “Stateless persons”.
- All States with gender discrimination in nationality laws or other identified issues affecting mothers’ ability to confer nationality to their children are encouraged to make time-bound pledges for law reform at the 2019 High-Level Event, as well as review other aspects of their nationality laws that could result in statelessness. Refer to [information](#) on States that have gender discrimination in their nationality laws. Find good practices with respect to the removal of gender discrimination from nationality laws [here](#).
- All States are encouraged to pledge to ensure that any child born on the territory *who would otherwise be stateless* will acquire the nationality of the State of birth. See good practices with respect to ensuring that no child is born stateless [here](#).
- All States are encouraged to take practical steps to realize their commitment under SDG 16.9 to ensure birth registration for all. Refer to [good practices](#) with respect to ensuring birth registration to prevent statelessness.
- All States that do not yet have Statelessness Determination Procedures (SDPs) in place are encouraged to make time-bound pledges to adopt such procedures at the 2019 High-Level Event. See [good practices](#) with respect to SDPs.
- All States are encouraged to include a question on country of citizenship in their upcoming population census (in accordance with [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#), paragraph 17g), in which the category “stateless” should be listed as a response option (in line with [Revision 3 of the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses](#), paragraph 4.112).