



## **N'Djamena Initiative on the Eradication of Statelessness in Central Africa**

We, experts of the Member States (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo and Chad) and Partner States (Democratic Republic of Congo and São Tomé and Príncipe) of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), **gathered** on 11 and 12 December 2018 in N'Djamena, Chad, for the regional workshop on statelessness organised by CEMAC with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in the framework of the global campaign to end statelessness by 2024;

**Considering** that CEMAC's main mission is to promote peace and harmonious development in Member States;

**Recognising** that the right to a nationality is a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in numerous other international and regional human rights instruments;

**Noting** that failings in civil status systems, including with respect to birth notification and registration as well as issuance of birth certificates, continue to present challenges in some countries in the region and may expose people to statelessness;

**Considering** also that for certain displaced, minority, nomadic or cross-border communities and other vulnerable groups, the absence of birth registration increases the risk of statelessness;

**Noting** the deplorable situation in which many people in our sub-region find themselves, deprived of legal identity and even nationality, and prevented from exercising their fundamental rights;

**Deeply concerned** by the fact that stateless persons face violations of their human dignity, as well as diverse barriers in accessing, among others, healthcare, education, social protection, formal employment, freedom of movement, and civil participation;

**Noting** the lack of awareness of the phenomenon of statelessness among numerous governmental and non-governmental actors, as well as among the general public;

**Noting** that nationality legislation does not always comply with international human rights instruments, and may generate new cases of statelessness;

**Noting** the firm commitment of our States to guarantee the rights contained in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and, for those party, in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;



**Taking into account** the willingness of States in the sub-region to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, whose target 16.9 aims to assure access to legal identity for all;

**Hailing** the initiative of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), which adopted in October 2017 a Declaration and Regional Action Plan on eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes;

**Taking into account** UNHCR's global mandate to identify, prevent and reduce cases of statelessness, and to protect stateless persons;

**Applauding** the AU-led initiatives for the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa;

**Encouraging** the efforts already initiated by certain States in the sub-region to address the scourge of statelessness and work towards its prevention;

**Conscious** that marginalisation and exclusion can undermine stability and development in our countries and in the central African sub-region and thus compromise sub-regional integration;

**Encouraging** the efforts of some States in the sub-region;

**Convinced** of the fact that enjoyment of the right to a nationality contributes to peace and security, as well as to social and economic development in the countries of the sub-region;

In light of the above, we:

1. **Express** our support for UNHCR's global #IBelong campaign to eradicate statelessness by 2024;
2. **Urge** CEMAC Member and Partner States to adopt the necessary legislative and administrative reforms to prevent future cases of statelessness and resolve existing cases of statelessness;
3. **Call upon** those CEMAC Member and Partner States who have not yet done so to accede to the 1954 and 1961 international conventions on statelessness;
4. **Underline** the importance and urgency of adopting the draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa;
5. **Affirm** the urgency and importance of a targeted sub-regional study to obtain profiles and reliable information on stateless populations and those at risk of statelessness, in order to develop strategies to curb statelessness and promote the right to nationality;
6. **Urge** States to nominate a focal point on statelessness for each country, as well as a deputy focal point, and to create an inter-institutional committee to oversee the development and implementation of a National Action Plan to eradicate statelessness;



7. **Encourage** the strengthening of civil status systems, including to make them more accessible to persons at risk of statelessness, and to ensure that every child is registered immediately at birth and that every child possesses a birth certificate;
8. **Highlight** the need to deepen public knowledge of the causes and consequences of statelessness, the risk factors specific to Central Africa, and the solutions to be put in place;
9. **Maintain** that a coordinated regional approach would be an asset for CEMAC countries in the fight against statelessness;
10. **Urge** States not party to adhere to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
11. **Encourage** States Parties to pursue the implementation of the relevant provisions of the aforementioned conventions and to ensure that men and women have equal rights in terms of acquisition, change and retention of nationality, as well as in transmission of nationality to their children;
12. **Encourage** the implementation and strengthening of legal and paralegal assistance programmes for persons who have difficulties accessing individual documentation.

N'Djamena, Chad, 12 December 2018