



Outcome document of Experts Conference on Eradication of Statelessness and Access to Legal Identity Documentation in the Great Lakes Region

We, experts of the Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region-ICGLR (Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Republic of Sudan, Republic of South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia),

Gathered from 25 to 27 July 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya, for the Experts' Conference on Eradication of Statelessness and Access to Legal Identity Documentation in the Great Lakes Region with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in the context of the consolidated Action Plan of the ICGLR on the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes region and in the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024;

Considering that ICGLR's main mission is to promote peace building and development in the Great Lakes region and in line with the ICGLR Pact and its Protocols;

Encouraging the efforts of Member States of the ICGLR to address the risk-factors of statelessness, including gaps in their laws and practices, and to work towards mitigation of these risks;

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;

Deeply concerned by the fact that stateless persons and people who do not have a document that recognizes a nationality are often deprived of access to basic rights, face diverse barriers in accessing healthcare, education, social protection, formal employment, freedom of movement, and civil participation;

Noting that marginalization, discrimination and exclusion can undermine stability and development of the local, national and regional development;

Recognising that resolving statelessness will strengthen the overall economic growth and development of ICGLR Member States;

Highlighting that nationality legislation that is not in compliance with international and regional standards against statelessness may generate new cases of statelessness;

Noting that failings in civil registration systems, especially with respect to birth registration and issuance of birth certificates, continue to present challenges in some countries in the region and increase the risks of statelessness, especially for the children and descendants of



long-term refugees and migrants, and for minority, nomadic or cross-border communities and other vulnerable groups;

Taking into account the 2063 Agenda of the African Union which one of the flagship projects is to remove restrictions on Africans' ability to travel, work and live within their own continent;

Taking into account also the Sustainable Development Goals, whose objective is to 'leave no one behind' and whose target 16.9 aims to assure access to legal identity for all, including birth registration;

Recognizing the suffering of stateless persons who have shared their experience during the conference and the strategic contributions and opportunities for stronger collaboration with civil society organizations;

Welcoming the initiative of the ICGLR, which adopted in October 2017 at Brazzaville a Declaration and Regional Action Plan on eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes Region, reinforced by the 2020 adoption of the Consolidated Action Plan for the eradication of statelessness in the Great Lakes region;

Noting the firm commitment of our States to guarantee the rights contained in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Maputo Protocol, as well as in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;

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;

Noting the recently published study "Refugees from Generation to Generation: Preventing Statelessness by Advancing Durable Solutions in the Great Lakes Region", commissioned by the ICGLR in collaboration with UNHCR, and taking into account the recommendations to strengthen access to documentation for long-term refugees and to address risks of statelessness;

Considering that the ICGLR Member States host a total of 4.68 million refugees, of whom the vast majority have spent from five to over 20 years in their country of asylum;

Taking into account UNHCR's global mandate to identify, prevent and reduce cases of statelessness, and to protect stateless persons, and the objectives set out in the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness 2014-2024 and its ten-point action plan;

Noting that the #IBelong Campaign is coming to an end in 2024 and that it will launch a global multi-stakeholder Global Alliance to End Statelessness in 2024;



Noting over 55 pledges made by States in the context of the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness and the 2019 Global Refugee Forum to prevent and address statelessness, of which many remain unimplemented, and the opportunity to submit new impactful and concrete pledges at the upcoming Global Refugee Forum in December 2023;

Applauding the ICGLR Member States that have fulfilled their pledges and have taken important steps to grant nationality to stateless populations, to confirm nationality for persons who do not have a document that recognizes a nationality, prevent statelessness through legislative reform and improvement of access to civil registration for groups at risk of statelessness;

Noting the adoption by the United Nations Statistical Commission of the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics, developed by the Expert Group on Refugee, IDP and Statelessness Statistics.

In light of the above, we, statelessness focal points of the ICGLR Member States:

1. **Express** our support for UNHCR's global #IBelong campaign to eradicate statelessness by 2024;
2. **Encourage** ICGLR Member States to adopt the necessary legislative and administrative reforms to resolve existing cases of statelessness and to prevent future cases of statelessness, including ensuring sufficient safeguards to ensure that no child is born stateless;
3. **Call upon** those ICGLR Member States who have not yet done so to accede to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness;
4. **Urge** ICGLR Member States to accelerate the implementation of their pledges made at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness, the 2019 Global Refugee Forum and subsequent forums;
5. **Appeal** to development partners to support the ICGLR Member States in their efforts to eradicate statelessness in the Great Lakes region;
6. **Underline** the importance and urgency of finalizing and 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 and urge all ICGLR Member States and other African States to support its adoption;
7. **Appeal** ICGLR Member States to implement the recommendations of the regional study commissioned by the ICGLR and UNHCR "Refugees from Generation to



Generation: Preventing Statelessness by Advancing Durable Solutions in the Great Lakes Region”;

8. **Affirm** the importance of efforts by ICGLR Member States to improve quantitative and qualitative data relevant to statelessness, drawing on the International Recommendations on Statelessness Statistics and UNHCR guidance on researching statelessness, in order to identify the principal causes and impacts of statelessness in their countries, establish better estimates of the numbers of people affected, and the necessary measures to reduce and prevent statelessness in the Great Lakes region;
9. **Urge the ICGLR** Member States that have not yet done so to nominate a focal point on statelessness, 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;
10. **Encourage** the strengthening of civil registry systems, to ensure that all children born in the country are registered immediately at birth and that every child is issued a birth certificate, whatever the legal status of the parents in the country, and that late registration of birth is possible for older children and adults born in the country whose births were not registered in a timely fashion;
11. **Reiterate** the key role of government statelessness focal points from ICGLR Member States in accelerating efforts to eradicate statelessness;
12. **Encourage** ICGLR member states to take into account the need to eradicate statelessness when identification technologies are adopted;
13. **Call upon** ICGLR Member States to support the Global Alliance to end Statelessness that will succeed the #IBelong Campaign, and join as members.

Nairobi, Kenya, 27 July 2023