

### NGO Statement on Statelessness

Dear Chair,

*This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.*

Stateless communities and those impacted by discriminatory nationality laws are increasingly suffering human rights abuses worldwide, with Myanmar and Gaza requiring the most urgent immediate and meaningful attention.

As UNHCR's **#IBelong** Campaign ends, there are opportunities to promote the right to a nationality without discrimination, including through the multi-stakeholder initiative of the **Global Alliance to End Statelessness**.

Full resourcing and support for the Global Alliance by UNHCR and donor States is crucial, and we encourage States and other actors to join the Alliance. We ask UNHCR to significantly increase its focus and resourcing on statelessness in line with the recent evaluation of UNHCR's statelessness work and the High Commissioner's global strategic priorities.

We urge the continued leadership and support of the state-led Group of Friends of the **#IBelong** Campaign.

Leadership by those with lived experience of statelessness and accountability is also essential. We welcome the launch of the *Global Movement Against Statelessness* in Malaysia, led by people directly impacted, which aims to strengthen collaboration and achieve positive change.

In **Africa**, five African countries still prevent women to transmit nationality to their children. We welcome recent legislative reforms addressing gender inequality in Liberia, Madagascar, and Sierra Leone, and the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on the *Rights to a nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness* calling to prevent statelessness and protect nationality rights without discrimination.

Nationality deprivation is a significant cause of statelessness in the **Americas**, notably in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua. Childhood statelessness is a particular risk for Venezuelans. We welcome the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Resolution 04/2023 on nationality rights and the Cartagena+40 consultations. We urge greater concerted action to protect nationality rights and the rights of stateless people in the region.

Discrimination is the major catalyst for statelessness in **Asia and the Pacific**, with the Rohingya community serving as the most extreme example of persecution, crimes against humanity and genocide. States must act in line with their international obligations. NGOs are deeply concerned with forced evictions and demolitions of homes of the Sama Dilaut community in Malaysia and risk of regressive nationality laws. We ask for Malaysia, Nepal, Kiribati, and Brunei to reform nationality laws to eradicate gender discrimination. While most countries still have legislative gaps, the Philippines made significant reforms in their nationality laws to address statelessness while in Central Asia, States have made progress towards resolving statelessness.

In **Europe**, deliberate policies of deprivation of nationality also cause statelessness with Europe's largest stateless communities are indigenous to the continent. The absence of dedicated statelessness procedures is of concern. Children born to migrant or refugee parents face a risk of statelessness due to discriminatory nationality laws, and insufficient safeguards. NGOs urge European States to ensure nationality for all stateless children born on their territory and to implement the new provisions to improve statelessness identification in the EU Pact.

In the **MENA region**, discriminatory laws and practices further entrench statelessness among groups such as the Kurds and Bidoon, who endure significant human rights challenges. Further, nationality deprivation is used to exclude political opponents and human rights activists. Twelve countries in the region still discriminate against women in granting nationality to their children and most do not uphold women's right to confer nationality on a non-citizen spouse.

Effectively addressing statelessness requires promoting the right to nationality and equal rights regardless of legal status; urgent political commitment; and adequate resources from States. Prioritizing the voices and needs of stateless people and their communities is crucial, recognizing them as the experts who understand the solutions needed, and to whom we should always be accountable.

*Thank you.*