



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ZACHARY
MUBURI-MUITA**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION
(ICGLR)**

DURING THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON STATELESSNESS,

Nairobi, Kenya, 18 APRIL 2019

H.E the Cabinet Secretary for Internal Security and Provincial Administration of the Republic of Kenya;

H.E. the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya;

Excellencies Ministers in charge of nationality issues in ICGLR member states;

Excellencies, Ambassadors, representatives of the ICGLR National Coordination Mechanisms;

Excellency the Africa Director of UNHCR;

Distinguished Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited to Kenya;

Representatives of the RECs on statelessness issues;

Distinguished Experts;

My ladies and gentlemen representatives of civil society organizations

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen, All Protocols Observed.

I have the honor and the pleasure to address this gathering during the opening of this Ministerial meeting in order to review the Progress made in the implementation of the Brazzaville Declaration as well as the Regional Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region.

But first, allow me to extend sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Kenya for hosting this Ministerial meeting. I also wish to thank the UNHCR for its interest in our region and for its unwavering

support to our Organization and our Member States in the fight against statelessness.

Finally, I thank all the delegations here today for their interest in the work of this conference and for having responded positively, despite your many different occupations.

A stateless person, as you know, is above all a person with no legal existence, is a victim of human rights violations and can not benefit from any protection at national or international level while human rights are universal and inherent to human nature. And we all know that every human being can avail himself of all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights without any racial, sexual, ethnic or other discrimination, as well as other legal instruments for the protection of human rights ratified by the State on whose territory it is located.

However, in practice, the enjoyment of these rights is subordinated to proof of legal existence. In these circumstances, how can he enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms if he does not legally exist? How can one exercise their rights if it is impossible to establish one's identity?

You realize that a stateless person is unable to produce this proof and that is why he is the victim of violations of his fundamental rights, both civil and political, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

**Excellencies,
distinguished guests,**

Ladies and gentlemen,

In view of this, ten years before the launch of UNHCR's "I BE LONG" Global Campaign, the leaders of our region have been very forward thinking on this issue of statelessness because in the early days of the creation of ICGLR, that is to say in 2004, they had already stated their clear desire to eradicate this scourge in the region by inserting in the Dar Es Salaam Declaration on Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes, commitment 68 which states: "Adopt a common regional approach towards the ratification and implementation of the UN Conventions on Statelessness, harmonize relevant national laws and standards and provide refugees and IDPs with identity documents that enable them to access basic services and enjoy their rights ".

To materialize this commitment, the foreign ministers of the 12 member states of the ICGLR adopted in Brazzaville in the Republic of Congo in October 2017, during the 7th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the ICGLR, the Declaration of Brazzaville and the Regional Plan of Action for the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region, with the support of UNHCR.

Thus, as part of the implementation of this Declaration and its Regional Plan of Action, the Secretariat of the Conference has made significant progress jointly with UNHCR, including the organization of this Review Conference. These include: (i) initiation of targeted advocacy for member states for the appointment of government focal points and the establishment of national task forces on statelessness; (ii) initiation of advocacy for the appointment of ICGLR and UNHCR Regional Focal

Points; (iii) organization of a capacity-building workshop for government focal points on statelessness in April 2018 in Naivasha, Kenya; (iv) the production of a documentary on statelessness in the Great Lakes region in April 2018; and (v) the organization of a training and capacity-building workshop for National Coordinators and members of the General Secretariat of the ICGLR Forum of Parliamentarians in June 2018 in Kinshasa, DRC.

Excellencies,

distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

No one is exempt from the risk of becoming stateless, everyone may be exposed to statelessness or may run the risk of becoming stateless. It's not just about others, it's about all of us. Imagine that somebody here would be deprived of their passport someday and find themselves unable to travel, withdraw money from their bank account, and so on. This would be catastrophic!

To achieve access by all to nationality in our region is not only a development goal but also and above all an objective of peace and security because a stateless person is a real threat to international security.

Since peace is the sine qua non for any development and peace is our creed in the Great Lakes region, we all have an interest in focusing our efforts on this issue, with the aim of making Member States ratify and

implement the International Conventions on Statelessness in order to facilitate access by all to the right to enjoy other rights, ie the right to nationality.

**Excellencies,
distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Regional efforts must be part of UNHCR's global momentum through the global "IBELONG" campaign and the global plan of action to eradicate statelessness worldwide by 2024.

I am convinced that the present Ministerial Conference on Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region is a decisive step in the process leading our States to ratify the International Conventions on Statelessness.

I also believe that it is important that during this ministerial segment, the addendum to the 2020-2024 Regional Action Plan be validated, in the interest of consolidating our efforts to fight against statelessness.

Thus, on behalf of the Conference Secretariat, I encourage all the Member States present to make additional commitments so that the actions of the region do not stop in 2019 and also to allow a little progress to be made faster in the process of ratification of the International Conventions on Statelessness and have a positive balance sheet to present at the High-Level Event on Statelessness to be held in October 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I know that our Member States have significant challenges to meet in order to achieve the expected results in the required time. Only, I want to reassure you that together with UNHCR we have made a commitment to accompany you throughout this process, in particular through the implementation of the following actions:

1. Support for the development of National Action Plans on the Eradication of Statelessness, in accordance with the Regional Action Plan;
2. Training of members of national statelessness task forces;
3. Financing of the regional study for French-speaking countries in order to have reliable and up-to-date information on statelessness, in addition to the study carried out for EAC countries;
4. Preparation of the addendum to the 2020-2024 Regional Action Plan;
5. Capacity building and training of non-state actors in the region for their involvement on statelessness issues;
6. Capacity building and training of Member State structures in charge of data collection on statelessness
7. Elaboration of a Protocol specific to the ICGLR on specific aspects related to nationality and statelessness;
8. Etc.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, dear participants,

I cannot finish my remarks without congratulating the Kenyan authorities for their commitment to holding this highly strategic activity for our region, including the UNHCR Regional Office in Nairobi.

I also thank my colleague from the Secretariat, Désiré IWANGOU, who, despite his many obligations, joined UNHCR's Bénédicte VOOS to technically prepare the work of this Ministerial Conference on Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region.

God bless the Great Lakes Region

God bless Kenya

Thank you.