

STATEMENT OF RWANDA ON PROGRESSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS SINCE THE LAUNCH OF THE “I BELONG CAMPAIGN” AND NEW PLEDGES ON ERADICATION OF STATELESSNESS

- Honorable, **Patrick K. Ole Ntutu**, Cabinet Secretary of Interior and Coordination of National Government, Kenya;
 - Honorable Ministers;
 - Major General (Rtd) **Dr. Gordon Kihalangwa**, Principal Secretary, State Department of Immigration and Citizen Services;
 - Ambassador **Zachary MUBURI MUITA**, Executive Secretary ICGRL;
 - Mr. **Raoul Mazou**, Director of Regional Bureau for Africa, UNHCR;
 - Mr. **Olabisi Dare**, Head of the Division of Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced persons, African Union Commission
 - Dear Experts;
 - Ladies and Gentlemen.
1. Before giving my remarks, let me in the name of Rwandan delegation, express our gratitude to the Government of Kenya for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us in this beautiful country. I would also wish to thank UNHCR and ICGRL secretariat for their facilitation and organization that enabled the meeting to be held here in Nairobi.
 2. The milestone in the fight against statelessness in the Great Lakes Region through the Declaration of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Member States on the Eradication of Statelessness adopted on 16 October 2017 in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, came at the right moment as Rwanda was undertaking a series of review in policies and laws relating to the right on nationality as one of the key rights of a person.
 3. The last two days session of experts has been a time to assess the progress made so far in implementing the commitments at national level, share experiences and best practices on ending statelessness, and draft regional action plan towards the achievement of the goal set by UNHCR which is “#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness by 2024”.

4. Before I elaborate on the Rwanda's pledges, let me present the main achievements in line with the 11 commitments of the Brazzaville Declaration, considering that some of the actions had already been implemented before the taking place of the Conference whereas others were under implementation but needed some adjustments to meet the regional and global standards.

Hon. Ministers,

Participants, all Protocol Observed.

5. Activities already achieved or under process by the time of the adoption of the Brazzaville Declaration are:
- i. Commitment to end statelessness in support of UNHCR's "#IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness" as the Government of Rwanda had acceded to the 1954 Convention relating to the status of stateless persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of stateless persons;
 - ii. Adopted the new nationality law in 2008 to comply with the Conventions;
 - iii. Was implementing the rights of women to ensure that women and men have equal rights to acquire, change and retain their nationality, and to confer their nationality to children and spouses: *through the provisions of the Rwandan Constitution where women has to get at least 30% in all electoral positions and through the nationality law, women in Rwanda have equal rights to men;*
 - iv. Was reducing the risk of statelessness by reinforcing civil registration mechanisms, in particular by ensuring that every child is registered immediately after birth, and that late birth registration procedures are accessible to all unregistered individuals born in the territory with loosed formalities: *In fact, the law on persons and family of 1988 was repealed in 2016 and the new law extended the new birth registration time (from 15 to 30 days) and late registration effected through the court was replaced by the affordable fine and such fine is waived in registering orphans. Secondly, in line with the Universal registration, awareness campaign against late registration of birth labeled "Civil Registration Week was launched and since 2017, there have been two campaigns across the country for all non-registered children below 18 years old. Thirdly, there is a draft law which shall give the power of civil registry to the head of hospital and health centres to carry out full civil registration*

services of the birth and death occurred in their respective institutions and immediately issue valid status records.

- v. All individuals entitled to nationality under domestic laws are issued with documentary proof of their nationality: *the birth certificate for the new registered, ID for the nationals aged 16 and nationality certificate for the naturalized. The new born to refugees are registered as nationals and refugee cards are issued to the adults.*
- vi. The focal person on statelessness was designated in order to follow up the progress in the implementation of the commitments outlined in the declaration.

Hon. Ministers,

Participants, all Protocol Observed.

- 6. Activities not yet achieved or implemented are mainly the following:
 - i. The prevention and eradication of statelessness by reforming nationality and related laws in order to include appropriate safeguards against statelessness as the current law does not adequately provides for them. It is now under review to have better provisions related to the statement;
 - ii. Obtain accurate of information on the causes of statelessness and the number and profile of stateless persons in order to design and implement appropriate strategies to address the issue: *no case of statelessness is identified so far, but they are persons at risk of statelessness due to the longer stay in the territory without documentations from countries of their origin;*
 - iii. Rwanda has participated in the drafting of the protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights on the rights to nationality and the eradication of statelessness in Africa and is ready to ratify it once adopted.

**Hon. Ministers,
Participants, all Protocol Observed.**

7. The pledges of Government of Rwanda are reflected in activities that were not implemented or achieved:
 - i. Setting up a National Taskforce in collaboration with Local Authority in near future;
 - ii. Drafting a concept note and Terms of Reference which shall guide the work of the taskforce;
 - iii. Conducting the census of possible stateless persons or persons at risk of being stateless;
 - iv. Enacting the revised Nationality Organic Law;
 - v. Proceed with the grant of nationality to all persons found stateless or at risk of being stateless.

8. Honorable all Protocol Observed; I would not end this statement without saying that successful achievement of these pledges needs collective efforts and we welcome whatever contribution of our partners here present to make the statelessness in the coming years a past story.

Thank you