

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: ____/2023
Venue: Cape Town, South Africa

Date: 04 September, 2023

Training Workshop and Steering Meeting on the Draft Protocol on the Specific Aspects of the Right to Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa



The Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development of the African Union Commission (AUC), the Office of the Legal Counsel (OLC), African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) in coordination with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) organized a training workshop and steering meeting session for AU Commission staff on the draft Protocol on Statelessness in Africa and the international legal frameworks for the prevention and eradication of stateless in Africa from 04 – 05 September 2023.

Delivering the opening remarks on behalf of Her Excellency H.E. Amb. Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs & Social Development (HHS), Professor Julio RAKOTONIRINA, Director of Health and Humanitarian Affairs Directorate of the African Union Commission (AUC) commended the leadership of the Bureau of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees, and Displaced Persons and PRC Sub-Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs, the team of experts from the AU Commission, the Banjul Commission through its Vice-Chairperson and former Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Migrants, Asylum-Seekers, Stateless Persons and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, Ms. Maya Sahli Fadel who has played a leading role in the progress of this file, as well as the UNCHR for the remarkable done on the right to nationality and the eradication statelessness in Africa during the past 10 years. Professor Julio further expressed his gratitude to the organs of the African Union, namely the African Commission on International Law as well as the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, that work closely with HHS on the issue of statelessness for their commitment and dedication to defending the rights of the most vulnerable people in our societies. He also highlighted the exemplary collaboration of the Commission and all the stakeholders and how this partner demonstrates the readiness to support efforts to develop an appropriate legal instrument to facilitate access to nationality and protect the rights of stateless persons in Africa.

Dr. Buti Kale, UNHCR Representative to the AU & UNECA, reminded the participants that Statelessness is not theoretical but a life-altering, life-halting reality that adversely affects millions of people in Africa and has direct, dire consequences on the lives and livelihoods of individuals, families and communities on the continent. He also highlighted the role of UNHCR as a protection agency through the ten-year (2014-2024) **"#I Belong" Campaign** that aims to eradicate statelessness by the end of 2024. Dr. Kale recalled that Agenda 2063, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other African conventions on the protection of forcibly displaced persons enshrine the rights of "all" Africans, including stateless persons. He concluded that no single African should be left behind.

H.E. Ambassador Mahlaba Almon Mamba, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Eswatini and Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees, and IDPs delivering welcome remarks reiterated that the matter of statelessness is a plague on the

continent of Africa that needs to determined effort of AU Member States to prevent and to eradicate.

The issue of statelessness and deprivation of nationality in Africa remains at the heart of the African Union's concerns. It is a humanitarian issue with serious consequences in terms of stability and human development. It is also a human rights issue linked to the denial of an essential right and the absence of an enabling legal framework. Finally, it is a security issue, with consequences for the peace and stability of our States, because although it concerns a significant layer of society, it leads to exclusion and identity crisis and thus creates a favourable condition for crime and political violence.

The African Union, working to achieve the continental aspirations of integration, unity, human rights and people-centred development by 2063, is not sparing any no effort to combat statelessness and any form of deprivation of nationality on the continent. It is in this context that the Executive Council of the African Union, while receiving the draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa submitted to it by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, requested, in Decision **EX.CL/Dec.922 (XXIX) of July 2016** requested *"the Commission to take the necessary measures to ensure the processing of the draft protocol submitted in accordance with the procedures for the elaboration of the AU legal instruments."* The initiative taken by the African Union will to contribute, in fact, to both continental and global efforts to eradicate the problem of statelessness within AU Member States. Like refugees, stateless people are deprived political freedom of movement, socio-economic improvement of their lives, deprived fundamental rights to health care and many essential societal services. Likewise, societies and communities are deprived many opportunities of benefitting from their skills and knowledge.

The workshop, the first of its kind on the continent, aims to reinforce the capacity of Commission staff and key stakeholders in the domain of the right to nationality and the eradication of statelessness, as well as in mastering the draft Protocol on Statelessness in Africa. In addition, the workshop and steering meeting will discuss the comments and questions raised by the AU Member States during the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Justice and Legal Affairs (STC-JLA) in December 2022 and identify key priorities to be addressed before the extra-ordinary STC-JLA to be convened in November 2023. The finalization of the Draft Protocol, therefore, is hopefully going to see, at most, the total eradication or at least a drastic reduction of statelessness among many African societies where this plague still exists. Once the Draft Protocol is finalized, African Union Member States will have the mammoth task to adopt, sign and ratify it without a delay.

Further information should be directed to:

Mr. Michel Nshimba | Ag. Head Humanitarian Affairs Division, Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development| Email: nshimbam@africa-union.org

For media inquiries, please contact:

Mr. Gamal Eldin Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer | Information and Communication Directorate | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@africa-union.org

Web: www.au.int | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)