

Intervention under the 4th item of the agenda: Ensuring the right to a nationality for persons belonging to minorities through facilitation of birth registration, naturalization and citizenship for stateless minorities.

Intervention presented by: Elizabete Krivcova – Latvian Non-citizens' Congress, board member.

First at all, let me thank OHCHR Fellowship programme, where I participated 5 years ago. It empowered my community and me to stay for the rights of Latvian non-citizens.

Each case of statelessness in a country has its unique history, but the consequences are always the same - excluding, stigmatisation and violation of human rights. I come from the country where the situation of non-citizens, the vast majority of whom belong to the Russian linguistic minority, is probably the best among stateless people in the world. With some exceptions Latvian non-citizens have access to civil, social and economic rights. However, after years of relative stability, we face new wave of restrictions of minority rights in fields of education and language, as well as persecution of activists. My message here is – there is no good statelessness.

I think the aim of today meeting is to reaffirm, that statelessness is never an acceptable tool. It is not a tool; it is violation of human rights. Each exception leads to next exception. We have to stop it. It concerns also all surrogate statuses. There should be nothing between citizen and stateless person. The very essence of citizenship is equality - no half-citizen, no second-class citizens. However double citizenship or extensions of political rights to foreigners and to all residents of a country are very welcomed. Therefore, my recommendation is an ultimate applying of statelessness definition, made by the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

When we speak about children statelessness, it is very important to say, parents should have no right to choice statelessness for their children. Each stateless person or person with uncertain citizenship born in a particular country should be citizen of this country. Baltic states - Latvia and Estonia made a remarkable progress improving administrative procedures of registering new-born children as citizens. However, the option itself to register child as a non-citizen should be also eliminated. To prevent statelessness in the world we

need go further, in my view it should be broader implementing of *ius soli* principle in national laws. All stateless people born in a particular country regardless of their age should be registered as its citizens

Other way to eliminate statelessness is naturalization. The naturalization procedure should be fair and effective. In situation when individuals lost their citizenship because of state succession, secession or changing borders, they often feel disfranchised. Why citizenship was granted to one group living in the country, but other group of the same country has to proof its loyalty. People compare such naturalization as buying of they own stolen car. It could be reasonable, but it is unfair. Taking into account the link between minorities and statelessness, naturalization should be designed in a fair manner. Naturalization of stateless minorities should be different from naturalization of citizens of other countries. The implementation practice and administrative procedure are also important. Stateless minorities should not be asked to proof their loyalty, legal incomes or uninterrupted residence. Even exam of national language can be replaced with language courses as a step forward between majority and minority. The naturalization process has to be designed in really inclusive manner. Only fair naturalization process will be an effective mean to eliminate statelessness.

Thank you!

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