

**Speech made by Maria Martinez, MOSCTHA
Forum on Minority Issues 2018**

1. Good morning everyone, I am Maria Martinez, representative from the Dominican Republic of the Socio-Cultural Movement for Haitian Workers (MOSCTHA), which receives technical advice from the Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights.
2. I am grateful to have the opportunity to participate in this event as it allows me to express the concerns that we have as a society in the Dominican Republic around the subject in focus today, which is statelessness.

3. Development

Despite the advances that Latin America has witnessed regarding this matter, there are still many obstacles to overcome. In the particular case of the Dominican Republic, ruling 168.13 given by the constitutional tribunal in 2013 left more than 200,000 Dominican people of Haitian origin stateless, which is why in 2014 the government enacted Law 169.14 in order to resolve the situation. In the 4 years that have passed since the law was introduced there has been no significant improvement, in fact the law that we believed to be a solution led to exclusion and segregation.

One of the solutions presented by the State is naturalisation. We understand that naturalisation is one of the most viable and secure processes of acquiring citizenship, but this is not available for migrants and people who have had to leave their land, unlike those born in a state operating under the *jus soli* system, and due to the retroactive procedures in place in the Dominican Republic remain stateless.

Being stateless is synonymous with non-existence, and I wonder how someone that does not exist can help drive the development of a country? Let us think about this: recognised and empowered people, developed countries and challenges overcome.

4. From a civil society perspective, we believe that the most effective methods of eliminating statelessness are that:
 - countries with a stateless population conduct a census that identifies the number of stateless people and where they are, and they form an action plan with specific solutions that address the issues that first created statelessness;
 - they sign and ratify the conventions and protocols on statelessness, and enact the Statelessness Recognition and Protection Law;
 - they promote positive measures for the economic and social integration of stateless people;
 - they eliminate all forms of discrimination or segregation in the Civil Registry.

In the case of the Dominican Republic

1. The country must officially recognise full Dominican nationality of all the children of migrants who were born prior to the 2010 Constitution (Dominicans of Haitian origin).

2. A permanent mechanism must be introduced that grants the implementation of effective and long-term solutions to the issues that generated statelessness in the Dominican Republic, which brings together civil society, the state, the affected, and two technical institutions (UNHCR and IACHR) in order to guide us towards good practice and ultimately towards eliminating the lack of documentation in the country.