

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY MEETING ON THE RIGHT TO A NATIONALITY IN AFRICA

On the 19th and 20th October 2013, under the auspices of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, a meeting was held in Dakar, Senegal on the theme of the right to a nationality in Africa. Participants included representatives of civil society organisations from Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mauritania, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, as well as a representative of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in West Africa responsible for statelessness, and of the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa, headquartered in the Gambia.

The opening ceremony was chaired by the representative of the Ministry of Justice in Senegal, who, in his address, emphasised that although every State defined for itself the criteria for grant and loss of nationality, each State must, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in cooperation with other States, also take measures to ensure that every individual has a nationality. He indicated that Senegal saw itself as in the vanguard of the global struggle to secure the right to a nationality. He also urged that national legislation in African countries should permit Africans without a nationality to reclaim their social and legal status and thus to ensure the right to peace and development in Africa.

In her address to participants, Mme Maya Fadel Sahli, member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons for the Commission, who has been given the responsibility to take forward the work on the right to a nationality, emphasised that the aim of the meeting was to strengthen the dialogue between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and civil society on the question of the right to a nationality in Africa, and in particular to obtain the support of civil society for the effective implementation of the resolution on nationality adopted by the Commission during its 53rd ordinary session. In this respect, she proposed a road map to the organisations present that would lead to the adoption of a protocol on the right to a nationality in Africa to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The debates that followed focused in particular on:

- The draft study on nationality in Africa that the Commissioner and Special Rapporteur would soon present to her peers at the African Commission session in Banjul ;
- The question of statelessness in Africa;
- Analysis of situations in particular countries and regions in relation to the right to a nationality ;
- Ensuring civil society support for the proposed protocol on the right to a nationality in Africa;
- The contribution of civil society more generally to the realisation of the right to a nationality in Africa;
- The modernisation and effective protection of civil registry systems.

The participants welcomed the initiative of the African Commission to adopt a protocol on the right to nationality, and reiterated their support and commitment to ensure that the resolution is applied

and to lend their weight to all efforts to ensure the adoption by States parties to the African Charter of an additional protocol on the right to a nationality.

To this end, they decided to support stronger cooperation among civil society organisations on the right to a nationality and to mobilise other civil society organisations in the five regions of the continent for the purpose of ensuring that the right to a nationality is recognised in the future as a fundamental right of all Africans and that statelessness is eliminated on the continent. They noted that the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons creates an opportunity for advocacy for the realisation of the right to a nationality in Africa and the adoption of a protocol on this question.

The participants thanked the Senegalese authorities, the African Commission, OSIWA and WARIPNET for all the efforts to ensure the successful holding of the meeting and all the facilities made available during their stay in Senegal. They hoped that such effective cooperation would continue until the realisation of the ultimate objective, which is the adoption of an African treaty on the right to a nationality.

Adopted in Dakar, 20 October 2013

List of organisations:

- Club Union Africaine Côte d'Ivoire (Club UACI)
- Conscience International
- Constitutional Reform Project Nubian Rights Forum (NRF)
- Forum des organisations nationales des droits de l'Homme (FONADH)
- Haut-Commissariat pour les réfugiés pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest
- Institute for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (IHRDA)
- International Refugee Rights Initiative– Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative
- Legal Assistance Center (LAC)
- Norwegian refugee council
- Nubian Rights Forum (NRF)
- Rencontre africaine des droits de l'Homme (RADDHO)
- Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR)
- PLACE
- School of Human Rights and Governance
- Open Society Foundations (OSF)
- West African Refugees and Internally-Displaced Persons Network (WARIPNET)