

UNHCR applauds Moldova progress on statelessness

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) is pleased with Moldova's steps towards accession to the two UN Conventions on Statelessness and the preparation of legislation on statelessness determination.

Late last month the Parliament passed laws on accession to the two UN conventions as well as the law on amendment and completion of certain legislative documents which will introduce national statelessness determination procedure.

"UNHCR salutes the Parliament, the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Bureau for Migration and Asylum, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and others who contributed to the passage of these new laws," said Peter Kessler, UNHCR representative to the Republic of Moldova.

"The UN refugee agency will step up its assistance aimed at identifying, protecting and finding durable solutions for the stateless persons residing in Moldova thanks to these important steps," Kessler declared.

Millions of people around the world are affected by statelessness. UNHCR estimates that statelessness affects up to 12 million people worldwide, although the actual number is unknown.

According to the Republic of Moldova's Ministry of Information Technology and Communications, there are more than 2,000 registered stateless persons in the country.

In order to address the problem of statelessness UNHCR promotes accession to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, assists governments in drafting and implementing nationality legislation and provides training for government officials.

Over 2011 UNHCR sent government officials on a study mission to Budapest to study Hungary's laws and procedures on handling stateless persons while working continually to advise the authorities on relevant language to include in the legislation on determination.

Across Europe's 49 states, only 34 have so far acceded to the 1954 Convention and only 21 to the 1961 Convention. Worldwide, the number of accessions is only 71 and 42 respectively. Once Moldova accedes to these treaties with the deposit of its

instruments of ratification it will join a very select group of countries worldwide.

The problem of statelessness is very prevalent upon state succession. For example, many former Soviet or Yugoslav citizens who did not claim citizenship when their home country adopted a citizenship law, were out of the country or didn't get an exit stamp when they left home, have become stateless. People with historic ties to Moldova and who now reside in Central Asian states have approached UNHCR for help to resolve their cases.

One of the world's leading humanitarian agencies and twice winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, UNHCR has worked on statelessness since it was founded in 1950 because many refugees under its mandate lacked nationality. In 1974 UNHCR was given the global mandate for statelessness by the UN General Assembly.