



## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF GOVERNMENT FOCAL POINTS ON STATELESSNESS IN ECOWAS MEMBER STATES**

### **1. CONTEXT**

In 2014, UNHCR estimated that there were ten million stateless people worldwide, including at least one million in West Africa.

To prevent and put an end to statelessness by 2024, UNHCR has adopted a comprehensive 10 year action plan (2014-2024) to address existing situations of statelessness, to avoid the occurrence of new cases, and to help identify and protect stateless persons.

Taking leadership of such a vision in Africa, the Governments of ECOWAS member States, on the occasion of a regional ministerial conference on statelessness, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 23 to 25 February 2015, adopted a Declaration on the eradication of statelessness. This statement was approved by the ECOWAS Conference of Heads of States and Governments on 19 May 2015, which led to the adoption of the Banjul Action Plan in 2017.

By adopting this statement of obvious political significance, Governments committed to undertake a number of actions for the eradication of statelessness, including through the adoption of national plans of action within the framework of the 2014-2024 Global Action Plan.

### **2. JUSTIFICATION**

In this context, Member States committed to designate a focal point within their Governments on issues of statelessness and to meet regularly under the auspices of ECOWAS, in collaboration with UNHCR, in order, among others things, to monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the conference (article 22 of the Abidjan Declaration).

Since then, most Member States have nominated focal points.

Furthermore, Article 6.11 of the Banjul action plan provides that each Member State shall appoint its focal point and inform ECOWAS and UNHCR through *Note verbale*.

Taking into account the fact that the diversity of laws, organizations and administrative practices amongst member States does not help create a harmonized approach towards the designation and terms of reference of the focal points on statelessness, article 6.1.2 of the Banjul Action Plan requires ECOWAS, with the assistance of UNHCR, to draw up terms of reference for the focal points.

This document is therefore intended to implement article 6.1.2 of the Banjul Plan.

### **3. MISSION AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STATELESSNESS FOCAL POINT**

The Focal Point on Statelessness shall coordinate, promote, implement or facilitate the implementation of activities aimed at developing a National Plan of Action and ensuring its enforcement.

In this context, the Focal Point shall:

- 3.1. Advocate for the development and adoption of a National Plan of Action;
- 3.2. Take steps; and encourage others to take steps, to carry out the activities provided for in the National Plan of Action;
- 3.3. Coordinate the activities of stakeholders;
- 3.4. Organize the assessment of the implementation of the action plan;
- 3.5. Collect information from relevant ministries/agencies, draft and present periodic country reports on the implementation of the Banjul Action Plan, which shall be shared with stakeholders;
- 3.6. Represent the Member State and/or ensure that the State is represented, in national, regional and international meetings on issues of statelessness and share detailed reports of each meeting with the relevant Ministries;
- 3.7. Ensure that the State works effectively with ECOWAS, UNHCR and other relevant stakeholders on statelessness matters.

### **4. PROFILE AND NOMINATION OF THE FOCAL POINT**

The focal point shall be:

- A natural person who, as a result of his/her role or activities, deals with matters of citizenship and/or statelessness, and/or civil registration; or,
- A special collegial body comprising representatives of State administrative bodies whose responsibilities or activities relate to issues of nationality and/or statelessness.

The Focal Point is appointed in compliance with the internal procedures of each State. ECOWAS and UNHCR shall be informed of the appointment through *Note verbale*.

## **5. TENURE**

The duration of the assignment of the focal point is subject to the discretion of respective Member States. But in order to facilitate follow-up, create synergy and maintain coherent and effective actions at the regional level, ECOWAS recommends that governments ensure, to the extent possible, the stability and continuity of the focal point's tenure.

## **6. RESOURCES**

The activities of the Statelessness focal points are to be funded by their respective Governments, with support from ECOWAS, UNHCR and other development partners.

Saly, Senegal

18 October 2017

DRAFT