

Remarks by the Minister of Labour and Social Security Hon. Phila Buthelezi at the Global Summit on Gender Equality in Nationality Laws, Held on 13TH June at the Ecumenical Center, Geneva.

Program Director

Filippo Grand, UN High Commissioner for Refugees,

Marc Rubin UNICEF Deputy Regional Director for (MENA),

Catherine Harrington, Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights

Adriana Quinones, UN Women

Esteemed Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

His Majesty's Government is pleased to have been invited to participate at this Global Summit on Achieving Gender Equality in Nationality Laws. The Kingdom of Eswatini aligns itself with the global campaign against statelessness and remedial measures are being progressively implemented towards this goal. The Kingdom has also acceded to the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

In an endeavor to address inequality and prevent statelessness, the Government adopted the National Action Plan to Eradicate and Prevent Statelessness in 2019. Furthermore, the Government committed by making four pledges to eradicate statelessness by 2024, in line with the (hash tag (#) ***'I belong Campaign.'***

We have also held extensive consultations on the prevention and eradication of statelessness with stakeholders including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) other United Nations agencies, Government agencies, civil society, Parliament and affected persons.

His Majesty's Government further recognizes that gender discriminatory provisions in nationality laws have a negative impact on society, mostly to children that do not have the right to their mother's nationality. I am therefore happy to report that just a few days ago on the 8TH of June, 2023 the National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Bill was passed by both Chambers of Parliament. This Bill seeks to, amongst other things, remove the gender discriminatory provisions which exist in the current Births, Marriages and Deaths Act, 1983. The Government is also implementing the recommendations made to the country during its last Universal Periodic Review.

Further progress has been achieved following the appointment in 2018 of the Focal Person on Statelessness in line with the 2017 Migration Dialogue recommendations. The Focal Person is responsible for among other things, coordinating statelessness activities in the Kingdom.

In 2019, the Government along with civil society adopted a National Action Plan to Eradicate Statelessness (NAP) which was approved by Cabinet.

On March 17, 2022, the Ministry of Home Affairs entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on implementation of the National Action Plan.

The Kingdom of Eswatini was among the first countries within the region to have adopted a National Action Plan; and the political will thus demonstrated qualified Eswatini to receive funding which would also support the study on the stateless population.

A Mop up Exercise to scale up birth registration was commissioned along with the study on the stateless population. The Report on the Qualitative Study on Statelessness was validated at a meeting held with stakeholders on the 9TH of June 2023.

The Kingdom has also participated in discussions on and supported the adoption of the Draft Protocol to the Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Specific Aspects of the Right to Nationality and Eradication of Statelessness in Africa. We look forward to the support of our partners in mainstreaming these instruments into our national policies.

Eswatini is determined to eradicate discriminatory laws that hold us back from achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the Government has prioritized the harmonization of our laws with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The family laws such as the Marriages Act of 1984, are currently before Parliament for consideration and approval. Both the Marriages Bill and Matrimonial Property Bill seek to promote and protect the rights of women and children. The Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act promulgated in 2018 has played a significant role in protecting the rights of women. This underlines the concrete steps taken by the country in closing the inequality gap between men and women.

As I conclude, the Kingdom of Eswatini is proud to affirm its commitments to uphold gender equality in our laws. These will be carried out diligently

in a framework of national consultations as well as in collaboration with our international partners.

I thank you