

Joint Statement on Ensuring UN System Inclusion of Stateless Applicants

We present this joint statement to support the extension of UNHCR's good practice on inclusive employment for stateless persons to the wider United Nations (UN) system. This statement reflects the shared commitment of organisations working to advance the rights of stateless persons and to promote practical measures that remove discrimination and barriers to equal opportunity. Recognising the UN's vision of a world where everyone enjoys their rights without exclusion, this joint effort highlights the importance of ensuring that all UN agencies uphold consistent and inclusive employment practices.

In August 2024, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) enacted a significant procedural change that, for the first time, allowed stateless individuals to apply for employment at the UNHCR. This breakthrough was the result of direct and sustained advocacy by Apatride Network, a stateless-led organisation that guided UNHCR to remove the administrative barriers that excluded stateless people from equality of employment opportunity.

The change was twofold: a relevant "Stateless" category was introduced into UNHCR's nationality dropdown menu, and UNHCR's Human Resources and Legal departments aligned their internal procedures to ensure that applications from stateless persons could be processed. This was more than a technical fix. It served as recognition that stateless persons exist, that they have the right to equal opportunities, and that their expertise and lived experience are essential to the UNHCR's statelessness mandate.

This victory, important as it is, remains limited. While it is critical that UNHCR, which is mandated to address statelessness, has taken the step of ensuring equality of opportunity for stateless people, it is important that this step is implemented across the entire UN system. Such progress would be consistent with the [UN's own inclusion policy, values, commitments to equality and non-discrimination](#), and objective to ["leave no one behind" as a core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

The responsibility now lies with all UN agencies to replicate UNHCR's good practice. We would like to highlight the following reasons why this is important:

1. Equal rights must be upheld. Stateless persons are entitled to the same rights as all individuals, including the right to equality of opportunity and employment. As an organisation bound by international human rights standards, the UN has a responsibility to address any unwarranted barriers and ensure that its internal practices fully align with its stated principles of inclusion and non-discrimination.
2. The UN's credibility depends on consistency between its values and its internal practices. The organisation cannot effectively champion inclusion, equality, and the commitment to "leave no one behind" if its own systems inadvertently perpetuate exclusion. Having UNHCR implement these reforms while other UN agencies do not also creates inconsistency and an uneven approach.
3. The solutions are available. The introduction of a simple "Stateless" nationality option, paired with clear internal guidance, removed barriers to stateless persons without creating new complications in the UNHCR careers system. This model can be replicated across the UN system with minimal cost or delay, utilising the experience of established good practice.

This is a call to action. We urge every UN agency to introduce a 'stateless/undefined' nationality category in their systems, reform their internal procedures in line with this inclusion, and actively recognise stateless persons as applicants and potential colleagues. Doing so is a legal and moral

obligation. This simple reform also has the potential to strengthen the UN system itself by drawing on the lived experience of stateless persons and by fulfilling the UN's own mandate, values, and commitments to inclusion and human rights for all.