

Unofficial Translation

Arab Conference on Good Practices & Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights League of Arab States Secretariat General, 1-2 October 2017 Final Declaration

The first Arab Conference on Good Practices and Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights was held in the presence of 18 Arab countries, in collaboration with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights on 1 and 2 October 2017 at the Headquarters of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and in the presence of representatives of Member States, parliamentarians and representatives of civil society; and with the participation of the General Secretariat of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, the Arab Parliament, the Arab Labor Organization, Arab Women Organization, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The aim of the conference was to reaffirm the importance of documentation and the sharing and strengthening of existing efforts in the region in order to expand good practices in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in nationality laws, also to study challenges and develop frameworks for solutions based on the "Cairo Declaration for the Advancement of Women and the Arab Strategy for Women Development 2030", and the decisions of the first Ministerial Conference on "Women and the achievement of peace and security in the Arab region", held by the League of Arab States and UN Women in Cairo in September 2016, and the Regional Expert Meeting "Our children...Our Future: Belonging and Legal Identity", held by the League of Arab States in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in October 2016 in Cairo, as well as the Gulf Regional Conference on Achieving Women's Nationality Rights, held by the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights in Manama, Bahrain in February 2016; as well as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan.

The Conference stressed upon the importance of building on existing efforts to promote women's rights in the area of citizenship and to promote gender equality in the acquisition, change, retention or conferring of nationality in the region, in line with the commitments of Member States, the international human rights conventions ratified by Member States, and their national laws, thereby limiting discrimination and the risk of exploitation and the abuse of women and children.

We the participants:

Reaffirming the right of every person to the enjoyment of nationality and to be recognized everywhere as an equal person before the law, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, without discrimination;

Recalling the traditions of the Arab region and the principles set out in the Arab Charter on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which promotes the right of all persons to legal identity, family life and family unity, as well as the 2014 Sharjah Principles for the Protection of Refugee Children, which sets out measures to ensure that refugee children enjoy these rights in particular;

Affirming the commitment of the Arab region to equality of dignity and equality in law for all citizens without discrimination, as enshrined in the Arab Charter on Human Rights, including articles 5 and 9;

Welcoming also recent actions by States to reform their nationality laws or to give a clear commitment to reform to grant equal nationality rights for women and men;

Welcoming the progress made by the States of the Arab region at the national and multilateral levels to respond to current humanitarian crises, including solutions to secure legal identity;

Valuing the important role and value added of the League of Arab States and its related committees in supporting further solutions through advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building, information dissemination, research and innovation, knowledge exchange and good practices;

Recognizing that each State has the right to legally determine its nationals in conformity with international standards and obligations;

Commending the experiences of the Arab States and the steps taken to promote women's rights and equality with regards to nationality;

Recognizing that situations of conflict, asylum and forced displacement threaten the rights and safety of women, children and affected families, whose vulnerability is compounded by the absence of documentation necessary for the composition of the family, the protection of its unity, identity, personal status and the nationality of its children;

Recalling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the fifth of which calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by 2030, and target 10.3, which calls for the repeal of laws and the elimination of discriminatory policies, and goal 16.9, which calls for universal access to legal identity, including birth registration of all children by 2030 as a basis for improving social protection for all and, in particular, of the most marginalized groups, and thereby, facilitating access to assistance in crises and promoting women's empowerment and reducing mortality especially newborns, which can be avoided;

The Conference adopted the following objectives, activities and opportunities as important areas in which the League of Arab States and Member States could contribute to the promotion of women's rights in the area of nationality in the Arab region:

1. To request Member States to support, develop, reform and implement legislation relating to nationality in conformity with international standards;
2. To request Member States to put an end to all forms of discrimination in the area of nationality and to take concrete steps to amend laws and legislation relating to nationality in order to grant women and men equal rights in conferring nationality to children and spouses and to acquire, change or retain nationality in conformity with international standards and not contrary to national interests;
3. To provide regional support to promote the achievement of relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including goals 5, 10 and 16;
4. To encourage and support the effective implementation of laws, including awareness-raising, publicity, training and capacity-building for those concerned and competent to take into account the achievement of gender equality, including judges, local leaders and relevant civil society;
5. To promote the lifting of reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which protects the equal rights of women and men to acquire, retain or change their nationality and confer it to children;

6. To request the League of Arab States to coordinate with Member States for the exchange of experiences, good practices and innovative responses to the promotion of women's rights in the area of nationality;
7. To emphasize the importance of addressing the issues of women's rights and gender equality within the framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, while recognizing the need to ensure gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and legal identity for all; and to encourage development actors to support the capacity of governments to enforce these efforts;
8. To nominate national focal points to brief the Secretariat of the League of Arab States on the good practices of Member States, and for the Arab League to hold periodic meetings in this regard;
9. To work out a regional plan of action to implement the recommendations of the "First Arab Conference on Good Practices and Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights";
10. To urge Member States to make every effort to reduce statelessness in the context of the international obligations of Member States and the application of the Sustainable Development Goals;
11. To urge Member States to update the 1954 Arab Convention on Nationality in line with political, social and economic developments;
12. To request the League of Arab States to submit the final communiqué and recommendations of the "Arab Conference on Good Practices & Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights" to the Council of Arab Foreign Ministers at its next session and to request the League to adopt the conference's periodicity.