

UNHCR welcomes Kenya's decision to end statelessness for the Pemba people

GENEVA - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, commends the steps the Government of Kenya is taking to resolve the long-term problem of statelessness for the Pemba people in Kenya.

During celebrations to mark the country's 59th Jamhuri Day on 12 December, Kenya's President Ruto announced that the Government will initiate modalities to recognize the Pemba people as citizens of Kenya.

"Once again, Kenya has demonstrated leadership in the aim to end statelessness around the world. This decision will ensure that the Pemba people will get access to the rights they deserve. UNHCR stands ready to support the process," said Caroline van Buren, UNHCR's Representative to Kenya.

The registration and issuance of individual citizenship documentation will enable the Pemba to fully contribute to Kenyan society and access their fundamental human rights on a par with other nationals. This includes access to education, health care, social protection, financial services and the formal labour market.

UNHCR, together with partners, will continue providing technical and operational support to the Government to ensure stateless populations are registered as Kenyans and are able to swiftly obtain documents, including birth certificates, registration certificates, and national IDs.

In recent years, Kenya has made important strides in efforts to resolve statelessness by recognizing as citizens thousands of other previously stateless people, including those from the Makonde and Shona communities and others of Indian descent.

This latest decision reinforces the Government of Kenya's commitment to fulfil its pledges made at the [High-Level Segment on Statelessness in October 2019](#). UNHCR encourages Kenya to implement the remaining pledges, including to accede to the two UN statelessness conventions and to undertake legal reforms to eradicate statelessness in Kenya.

Key reforms are also needed in the Kenyan Citizenship and Immigration Act to provide a legal framework for the registration of stateless people and to extend the mandate of the Taskforce on Statelessness. The Taskforce will steer the modalities for identification and registration of stateless people who are eligible for Kenyan citizenship.

UNHCR remains committed to working with and providing support to the Government of Kenya and other countries to further identify, prevent and resolve statelessness in accordance with the goals of the [#IBelong Campaign](#) to end statelessness by 2024.

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