Talking Points for UNHCR RBAP

Session 4 (Senior Officials): Civil registration and vital statistics as an accelerator for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring no one is left behind, 17 November 2021, 14:00 – 16:00 (BKK time)

Mr. Matthias Reuss, Senior Statelessness Officer

- Thank you, chair, for giving me the floor. Ladies and gentlemen:

- UNHCR’s regional protection priorities in Asia and Pacific have been inspired by the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the goals on “good health and well-being”, “quality education”, and “productive employment and decent work for all”. These three areas of health, education and livelihoods are inextricably linked to civil registration, in particular birth registration. Therefore, UNHCR highly appreciates the commitment by ESCAP Members and Associate Members to move the entire region towards universal and responsive civil registration systems. By living up to their commitment on civil registration, countries ensure that an important element is in place to create the basis for the achievement of the pursued development goals.

- The principle of “Ensuring that no one is left behind” is also reflected in UNHCR core strategic directions on the global level. Inclusion in national systems, services, and the economy is central to the concept of “leaving no one behind”. At a time when increasing numbers of displaced people live in a situation of long-term marginalization, UNHCR encourages their inclusion into national public services. Ultimately, all refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and stateless individuals should be
included in national civil registration systems that enable them to **progressively realize their human rights**, and at the same time allow them to prepare for **durable solutions**.

- For **refugees**, access to durable solutions in any country often depends on their ability to **prove their country of origin, place of birth, and parentage**. For refugee children born outside their parents’ country of origin, the problem becomes even more acute. For them, birth registration in national mainstream civil registration systems by government authorities remains the primary path to establish their legal connection to their parents’ country of origin. Birth registration makes durable solutions accessible. This **nexus between registration and solutions** applies equally to voluntary returns, resettlement, alternative pathways, and the building of resilience in the local context. That’s why the link between civil registration and the principle of leaving no one behind is so important for UNHCR.

- In conclusion: UNHCR engages with States, host communities, civil society, and key national service providers to promote the **inclusion of persons falling within UNHCR’s international protection mandate into mainstream national CRVS systems**. In this regard, we renew our assurances that UNHCR stands ready to assist ESCAP Members to realize their shared vision of universal and responsive CRVS systems.

- Thank you for your attention.