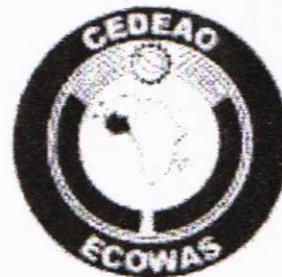


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ANNEX 4



**Ministerial Conference on Statelessness in the  
ECOWAS Region**

**Meeting of Experts**

**23 and 24 February 2015**

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
OF THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON  
STATELESSNESS IN THE ECOWAS REGION**

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The first regional Ministerial Conference on statelessness in West Africa, which brought together delegates from the 15 ECOWAS countries, discussed key issues related to the theme of the Conference:

Preventing new cases of statelessness through law reform

Preventing statelessness through civil status registration and access to nationality documents;

Political commitments, partnership and information-sharing;

Identification of stateless persons;

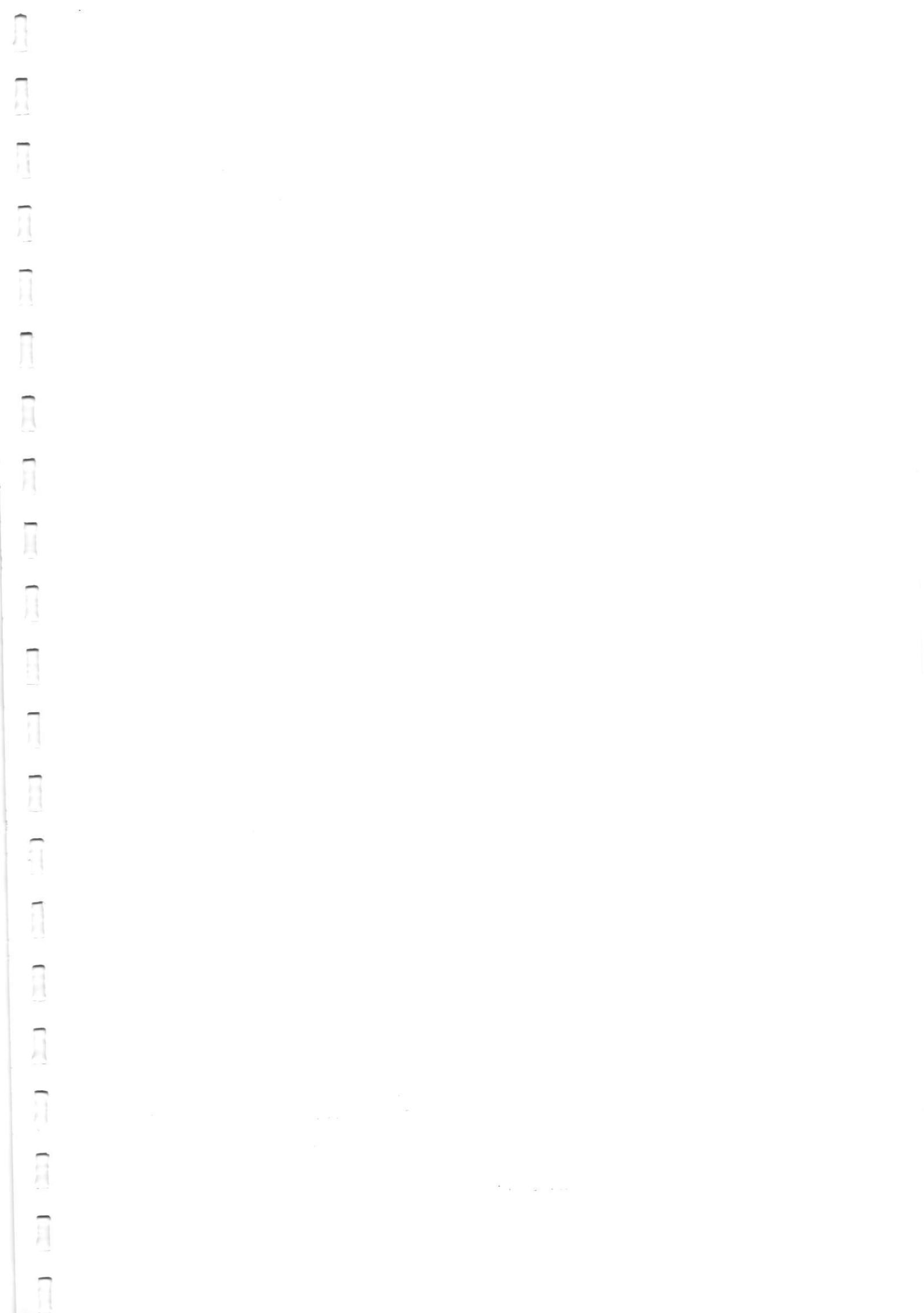
Protection of stateless persons;

Solutions for stateless persons and risks of statelessness.

The main conclusions and recommendations are the following:

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

1. The ECOWAS Member States are working towards regional solutions to the elimination of statelessness while keeping in mind that it is necessary first to strengthen their national administrative and legislative framework related to nationality;
2. It is essential to find solutions to statelessness which take into account the contemporary realities of West Africa and which are based on the continuity between traditional and modern systems, in particular by taking into account the role of the traditional powers and the social context of illiteracy;
3. We stress the importance of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and the fact that they retain all their relevance in the 21st century. We also emphasize that two important instruments containing rules for the attribution of nationality, thus participating in the fight against statelessness, have been developed and adopted in the framework of the African Union, namely, the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Protocol on the Right of Women in Africa.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Preventing new cases of statelessness through law reforms

4. Reaffirming the relevancy of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, we urge ECOWAS Member States which have not acceded to the two international instruments to do so by the end of December 2015.
5. We call upon the National Human Rights Institutions to set up a committee to monitor the accession to the Conventions by those States which have committed themselves in this regard and the implementation of the Conventions by States that have already acceded.
6. We call upon States to revise their laws in light of the relevant international and regional human rights instruments related to nationality and statelessness, and to guarantee the right to a nationality and the principle of non-discrimination. Once national legislations are revised to conform to international law, it is essential that their application be done on a retroactive basis in order to resolve existing situations of statelessness.
7. Recognizing the necessity of harmonizing the nationality laws in the sub-region and ECOWAS's pivotal role in eradication and prevention of statelessness, we recommend that ECOWAS, in collaboration with UNHCR and the competent institutions of the African Union, adopt common standards that will guide the reform of nationality legislation of West African States. It is essential that these standards include the following:
  - Removal of discriminatory provisions in national legislation concerning the transmission of nationality to a spouse or a child, including based on sex, birth out of marriage, religion, ethnic affiliation and disability.
  - Every child has the right to a nationality, his/her nationality must be confirmed no later than when the age of majority is reached, including through provisions guaranteeing that any person born in the country and who stays there during his/her childhood is entitled to obtain the nationality of that country either automatically or by his/her own choice.
  - Prohibition of the renunciation of nationality if the applicant has no other nationality.
  - Other safeguards against statelessness under the Conventions on statelessness and international and regional human rights treaties.

