



Concept Note for a High Level Side Event on Gender Equality in Nationality Laws at the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

1. Background

On the occasion of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59), governments and NGOs will convene in New York from 9 – 20 March 2015 to discuss progress achieved in the twenty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. This event is globally known as Beijing + 20. Under the Beijing Platform of Action, States committed to review their national laws to ensure that they are compliant with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Significant progress has been achieved in reforming nationality laws. In the past decade alone, twelve States have taken action to enable mothers to transfer nationality to their children on an equal basis as fathers. Twenty-seven countries worldwide continue however to discriminate against women in their ability to confer nationality on their children. Such laws can lead to statelessness, where, for examples, men are unable or unwilling to confer their nationality to their children. In addition, over sixty countries deny women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality, or confer their nationality on their non-national spouse.

Against the backdrop of a growing willingness by States to take action, a group of champion States, with the support of UN Women, UNHCR and OHCHR, will host a High Level Side Event to promote gender equality in nationality laws. At this event, States are encouraged to express their commitment to reform their nationality laws and ensure compliance with Article 9 of CEDAW. The event will also serve as a catalyst towards the development of formal commitments to remove gender discrimination in nationality laws, which States can deliver at a dedicated pledging event proposed by the CSW59 Secretariat in September 2015.

This concept note sets out the relevant details as well as the proposed format and content of the High Level Side Event

2. Date, Time and Venue

The High Level Side Event will be held from [insert time] on [insert day and date] in [insert venue] in the [United Nations General Assembly Building]. [Insert venue name] has capacity for [insert number] people.

3. Participants

Co-sponsoring States

It is hoped that co-sponsoring States will send letters of invitation to States in their respective regions which maintain provisions that discriminate against women in their nationality laws, as

well as those States which have recently reformed their laws, to attend the High Level Side Event. It is also hoped that co-sponsoring States will use their good offices in the lead-up to the High Level Side Event to encourage these States to announce commitments to reform their laws at the event.

The support of co-sponsoring States will be acknowledged in all materials advertising the event during the event itself, as well as in any documents recording the outcomes of the event.

Supporting UN Agencies

The High Level Side Event will be supported by UN Women, UNHCR and OHCHR. These three agencies will assist with the organization of the event and will also use their good offices to encourage States which maintain provisions which discriminate against women in their nationality laws, to attend the event and announce commitments to reform their laws.

Audience

Priority audience members will include States which maintain provisions in their nationality laws which discriminate against women, States which have recently reformed their nationality laws, as well as civil society groups attending CSW59 and working on issues of gender equality, children’s rights, nationality and statelessness.

4. Format

The High Level Side Event will be led by a panel of speakers comprising a moderator, a keynote speaker, one or two States which have recently taken action to remove gender discrimination from their nationality laws, and one State which might be willing to express its commitment to reforming its nationality law in the near future. Depending on the number of State panelists, the panel may also include representative from one or more of the UN Agencies.

Each of the States which have already taken action to reform their nationality laws to remove gender discrimination will have 5 minutes to explain the process which led to the reform and the impact that these reforms have had on women and their families. The State that is willing to announce a commitment to reform its laws will explain the reasons for arriving at the decision to reform, and the steps that the State plans to take to achieve the reform. UN Agency panelists will indicate what they are doing to encourage the reform of gender discriminatory nationality laws.

Following presentations by the panelists, the floor will be opened to States who wish to announce commitments to reform their laws or to make interventions from the floor. This process will be facilitated by the panel moderator.

5. Proposed Agenda

10 minutes	Moderator opens event and introduces keynote speaker
7 - 10 minutes	Keynote speech
10 minutes	Moderator thanks keynote speaker and introduces video showing individual women who have benefitted from reforms in Kenya and Indonesia
30 minutes	Moderator introduces each of the three State panelists who present for 5 minutes each
15 minutes	States that wish to announce their commitment to reform their nationality

	laws as well as other participants who wish to intervene are invited to take the floor.
5 minutes	Moderator thanks participants, provides information about the high-level commitment event in September 2015 and closes the event.