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Committee
United Nations
High Commissioner for
Refugees

General Assemblies

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#GTMUN2025

*Bridging
technology
and
diplomacy.*



Table of Contents

Letter from the Secretary General	5
Position Paper Rubric	6
Introduction to Committee	9
Disclaimer	10
Topic	11
Key Terms and Acronyms	12
Introduction	14
History of Statelessness and Legal Limbo	15
Post-War Realization (1945–1961): A Legal Concept Emerges	15
Neglect and Quiet Crisis (1960s–1990s): Statelessness Spreads	15
Mandate and Mobilization (1994–2014): The International Community Responds	16
Global Action and Implementation (2014–Present): From Pledges to Progress	16
Toward Accountability and Inclusion (2025–Present): The HLOM and Beyond	17
Current Situation	17
Directives / QARMAs	20
Bibliography	21



Letter from the Secretary General

Esteemed Delegates,

It is my greatest honor to welcome you to the 26th Georgia Tech Model United Nations Conference. My name is Victoria Rodriguez, and I have the privilege of serving as the Secretary General for the 2025 session.

As a mechanical engineering student here at Georgia Tech, I can confidently say that participating in Model United Nations (MUN) has opened several personal, academic, and professional doors. In this journey of 13 years, I've had the opportunity of being a delegate, a director, a mentor, and finally, a Sec-Gen. Sometimes a breeze, sometimes an up-hill battle filled with blood, sweat and tears. I've made several friends and won awards along the way, but what I truly carry with me are the important things: the value of empathy, the courage to speak when it matters, and the humility to listen when others have something to teach.

This year, we are bringing you our largest GTMUN to date. With approximately 900 delegates joining us in 16 committees, we are proud to be one of the most dynamic forums for debate in the Southeastern United States. And I can promise you that it will also be the best GTMUN yet, given the tireless work of our Secretariat and staff, who have poured their hearts and souls into building a conference that you will remember long after the gavels fall.

GTMUN is more than just a conference; it is an opportunity for exploration. Through the years, we have cultivated a space where you can explore different positions on the global stage, discover new ways to approach problems and craft solutions, and test the kind of delegate you want to become. You will experiment with speeches, refine your negotiation style, and create crisis arcs that challenge both you and your peers in committee. Just as Georgia Tech is a hub for innovation, GTMUN is the best space to challenge you intellectually, diplomatically, and personally.

But the value of this conference goes beyond leadership, teamwork, and public speaking. Like our slogan says, "bridging technology and diplomacy," GTMUN is about bringing ideas closer to people. It's about connecting logic with compassion, ambition with responsibility, and creativity with collaboration. I hope the skills you foster during this year's conference (and the friends you make along the way) will be something you carry with you far beyond these two days.

As you prepare for this conference, I encourage you to bring all your energy, passion, and curiosity into every committee session. Debate boldly, listen openly, and collaborate sincerely. On behalf of the GTMUN Secretariat, I welcome you to the GTMUN 2025 Conference. We cannot wait to see the impact you will make.

Wishing you the best of luck as you prepare for your committee,



Victoria Rodriguez

Secretary General of GTMUN 2025



Position Paper Rubric

What is a *Position Paper*?

A position paper is a paper which describes how a country intends to address the topics of the committee, detailing tangible solutions to committee issues and connection to the country's policies. A position paper should contain details for each topic that will be addressed by the committee.

Formatting Requirements

- 12-point font, double-spaced Times New Roman
- 1-2 pages per topic (excluding Works Cited page)
- A Works Cited page with citations in MLA format
- Files submitted in .pdf format with title "GTMUN25_{short committee name}_{assigned country name}.pdf"
- e.g., "GTMUN25_DISEC_GERMANY.pdf" or "GTMUN25_UNOOSA_United_States.pdf"

START EACH TOPIC PAGE WITH

- Committee: [Name of committee]
- Delegation: [Name of delegation]
- Topic: [Topic name/description]

In order to be eligible for awards, delegates must submit a position paper and receive a score of at least **12/20 (for single-topic committees)** or **24/40 (for double-topic committees)**.



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	Great (5)	Good (4)	Adequate (3)	Poor (1)
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed description of the topic (including dates and stakeholders) Several facts and statistics Discusses many relevant UN documents and resolutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic description of topic (including some dates and stakeholders) Some facts and statistics Discusses some relevant UN documents and resolutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal description of topic (with no or few dates and stakeholders) Few facts and statistics Misses some key relevant UN documents and resolutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear or incorrect description of topic Incorrect or missing facts or statistics No mention of relevant UN documents and resolutions
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country's detailed history with issue Detailed present position (or a strongly-defended inferred position) of country Several references to statements from appropriate officials or documents Several facts and statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country's basic history with issue Present position (or reasonable inferred position) of country Some references to statements from appropriate officials or documents Some facts and statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sparsely describes country's history with issue Present position (or basic inferred position) of country Few references to statements from appropriate officials and documents Few facts and statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorrect or missing description of country's history with issue Incorrect present position (or unreasonably inferred position) of country No references to statements from appropriate officials and documents Incorrect or missing facts and statistics
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed personal objectives Proposes well-supported potential solutions Identifies delegates to work with and provides strong reasoning for selections Actionable, reasonable solutions which are within the scope of the committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expresses personal objectives Proposes reasonable potential solutions Identifies delegates to work with and provides reasonable justification for selections Actionable solutions within the scope of committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States personal objective Proposes potential solutions Identifies delegates to work with Actionable solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No proposed goals or plans No potential collaborators mentioned Implausible or missing actionable solutions
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors Numerous and diverse citations from appropriate sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors Citations from appropriate sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes One or two citations from inappropriate sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes No citations from appropriate sources





Introduction to Committee

When conflict forces people to flee and the law fails to protect them, the world turns to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Created in 1950, the agency was established in the aftermath of World War II to respond to European refugee crises. What began as a temporary agency soon evolved into a permanent presence as new waves of persecution, conflict, and statelessness continued to arise around the world.¹

The mission of UNHCR, also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is to protect the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee. Its mandate covers refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced persons, returnees, and stateless individuals. The agency works to ensure access to safety, legal protection, and long-term solutions, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement in a third country.²

With operations in more than 130 countries, UNHCR responds to humanitarian emergencies while also helping states build sustainable protection systems. Its work includes supporting legal reform, strengthening civil registration, and advising governments on asylum and nationality law. UNHCR also leads global efforts to reduce and prevent statelessness, which affects millions of people who are not recognized as nationals by any state.^{3,4} Although it does not create or enforce laws, UNHCR plays a crucial role in shaping international responses to displacement. As a non-judicial, advisory body, it relies on voluntary funding and international cooperation.

Disclaimer

Model United Nations provides an opportunity for delegates to engage diplomatically with topics of global importance and explore possibilities for conflict resolution in a meaningful way. Many of the topics at hand may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter. We ask delegates to be respectful and professional when engaging with their committee and communicating with fellow delegates and GTMUN Conference staff. The content warning below is meant to warn you of potentially controversial topics that are present in the content of this background guide, as well as content that may appear in other aspects of the committee (e.g. debate, speeches, directives), so that you can prepare yourself before reading this background guide and participating in the committee.

10

At GTMUN, we take equity violations very seriously and require delegates to fully comply with our equity guidelines. Failure to do so will result in an immediate disqualification from awards, and you may be asked to leave the conference. Please remain respectful in committee, and avoid overgeneralizations as well as take into account individual differences and contexts during your speeches. If you have any questions regarding our equity guidelines, we encourage you to contact one of our staff members.

If, because of this committee's content warning, you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to our staff via email at gtmunconference@gmail.com.

Topic

Addressing Statelessness and Legal Limbo through Humanitarian and Legal Reform



Key Terms and Acronyms

12

Statelessness	The condition of not being recognized as a citizen by any state. Stateless persons lack access to rights such as education, legal employment, healthcare, and political participation. This is the core issue of the committee.
Legal Limbo	A condition in which an individual lacks formal legal status or protection, despite residing within a country's borders. Often applied to persons who are neither recognized as citizens nor granted refugee or protected status.
Statelessness Determination Procedure (SDP)	A legal process used by states to identify stateless individuals and grant protective status. SDPs are underdeveloped globally but are central to UNHCR's recommended policy toolkit.
Nationality Law Reform	The process of updating citizenship laws to address exclusion, eliminate discrimination, and provide clear acquisition or restoration pathways. Reform is often required to prevent or resolve statelessness.
Naturalization	The process by which a non-citizen acquires nationality. Stateless individuals often face heightened legal and financial barriers to naturalization, even after years of residence.
Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)	A state's system for documenting key life events, including birth and death. Strengthening CRVS systems is a critical strategy to prevent statelessness and resolve legal limbo.
#IBelong Campaign	UNHCR's global initiative (2014–2024) to end statelessness through legal reform, improved identification, and political mobilization. Supported by over 90 states and regional actors.

<i>Global Action Plan to End Statelessness</i>	A 10-step policy framework accompanying the #IBelong Campaign. It offers concrete guidance on law reform, documentation, inclusion, and data collection.
<i>Global Alliance to End Statelessness (2024–)</i>	A multilateral platform launched to continue coordination beyond the #IBelong Campaign. It facilitates implementation, technical support, and accountability.
<i>UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)</i>	The lead UN agency responsible for the protection of stateless persons, refugees, and asylum-seekers. It guides legal reform, technical assistance, and international coordination.
<i>UNICEF</i>	UNHCR's primary partner on child-focused statelessness issues, including birth registration and legal identity initiatives.
<i>IOM (International Organization for Migration)</i>	A key partner in addressing statelessness within mixed migration flows and in building state capacity for identity and documentation systems.
<i>OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights)</i>	Supports legal advocacy to challenge discriminatory nationality laws and promote inclusion through a rights-based approach.
<i>UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)</i>	Partners with states and UNHCR to strengthen civil registration, governance infrastructure, and legal identity systems, especially in fragile or post-conflict contexts.

Introduction

Across the globe, millions of people live without a nationality, i.e., are stateless. Statelessness arises when no country recognizes an individual as a citizen under its laws. Without legal nationality, these individuals are denied access to education, healthcare, legal employment, and basic documentation. Many also fall into legal limbo, present within the borders of a state but without any of the rights, protections, or recognition that citizenship provides.^{3,4}

In 2014, the UN Refugee Agency launched the #IBelong Campaign, a ten-year initiative to end statelessness. The campaign introduced the Global Action Plan, which outlines ten key actions such as legal reform, universal birth registration, improved data collection, and stronger protections against loss of nationality. While more than 30 countries have taken steps toward these goals, the scale and complexity of statelessness continue to prevent global resolution.³

14

As of 2023, UNHCR had identified at least 4.4 million stateless individuals under its mandate, though the actual number is likely far higher due to underreporting and weak identification systems.³ In many countries, there are still no formal procedures to recognize or resolve statelessness, and affected individuals often go uncounted and unheard. Some governments enforce laws that exclude entire communities based on ethnicity, religion, or gender. In Southeast Europe, for instance, many Roma families remain undocumented due to systemic discrimination and lack of access to civil registration. In South and Southeast Asia, ethnic minorities such as the Rohingya face similar barriers, often spending their entire lives without nationality despite being born and raised in their home country. These cases are not isolated. They reflect how discriminatory policies, administrative failure, and political inaction continue to entrench statelessness across generations.³



UNHCR's education initiatives in Balochistan July 2022

UNHCR's strategy focuses on strengthening national legal frameworks, expanding civil registration, identifying stateless populations, and directly supporting those at risk.^{3,4} Its Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2026 emphasizes building stronger partnerships with states, improving data systems, and promoting policies that ensure every person has access to a legal identity.⁵

The consequences of statelessness and legal limbo are not only legal but deeply human. Without recognition by any state, stateless individuals are denied the ability to participate in society, support their families, or make decisions about their future. Many endure lifelong exclusion, and children born into statelessness inherit a legacy of invisibility. Entire communities remain trapped in cycles of poverty, instability, and marginalization.

As delegates in this committee, you are asked to look beyond legal frameworks and see the people who have been left behind. Statelessness is not just a legal issue; it is a lived reality marked by erasure and exclusion. Behind every gap in policy is a person without protection, a child without a future, a family without a home. Solving this crisis requires more than technical solutions. It requires compassion, creativity, and a commitment to building a world where every person is seen, protected, and has a place to belong.

History of Statelessness and Legal Limbo

Post-War Realization (1945–1961): A Legal Concept Emerges

15

In the aftermath of World War II, statelessness surfaced as one of the most urgent consequences of global conflict. Millions were left without citizenship as borders changed, empires collapsed, and new governments failed to recognize entire populations. The 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons was the first international agreement to define statelessness and set minimum rights. This was followed by the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which introduced safeguards to prevent children from inheriting this condition. These conventions laid the legal foundation, but adoption was slow, and statelessness remained a fringe issue on the global agenda.

Neglect and Quiet Crisis (1960s–1990s): Statelessness Spreads

For decades, the issue remained largely invisible. As newly independent countries emerged in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, many created exclusionary citizenship laws that denied nationality based on ethnicity, gender, or descent. In Myanmar, the 1982 Citizenship Law rendered the Rohingya stateless. In the Dominican Republic, Dominicans of Haitian descent lost recognition despite



UNHCR delivers core relief items to IDPs in Kayin State

generations of residence. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1990s introduced new waves of statelessness across Eastern Europe, as states failed to account for ethnic minorities and internal migrants. Despite these trends, statelessness was not yet treated as a mainstream human rights issue.

Mandate and Mobilization (1994–2014): The International Community Responds

Starting in the 1990s, a shift began. A series of UN General Assembly resolutions and internal policy changes formally expanded UNHCR's mandate to include identifying, preventing, and reducing statelessness. Slowly, statelessness moved from an overlooked legal technicality to a recognized human rights issue. National reforms began to emerge. In Côte d'Ivoire, post-conflict reforms aimed to restore nationality to people who had been left out. In Kyrgyzstan, targeted legal efforts ultimately resolved the country's entire known caseload of stateless individuals by 2013. These examples demonstrated that statelessness was not permanent — it could be solved.

16

Global Action and Implementation (2014–Present): From Pledges to Progress

The launch of the #IBelong Campaign in 2014 marked the first globally coordinated strategy to end statelessness. UNHCR's 10-Point Global Action Plan gave governments a roadmap to reform nationality laws, improve civil registration, and protect stateless persons. In 2019, the High-Level Segment on Statelessness generated over 300 pledges from states, regional bodies, and civil society, signaling widespread political commitment. Regional action plans in the Western Balkans, Central Asia, and West Africa began to improve birth registration and legal documentation, supported by UNHCR and partners such as the European Union. However, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed persistent gaps, as many stateless communities were left out of relief programs and healthcare systems. In response, UNHCR launched its Strategic Plan for 2023–2026 and, in 2024, the Global Alliance to End Statelessness. These initiatives shifted the focus from awareness and commitment to action, monitoring, and systemic change.



UNHCR distributes winter cash payments to displaced families in Kabul

Toward Accountability and Inclusion (2025–Present): The HLOM and Beyond

Following the conclusion of the #IBelong Campaign in 2024 and the launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness, 2025 marks a decisive shift toward implementation and accountability. The High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM), scheduled for December 2025 in Geneva, serves as a key milestone in the Global Compact on Refugees process. With over 3,300 pledges submitted globally and new legal reforms emerging across every region, the HLOM aims to assess national and regional progress, identify implementation gaps, and promote sustainable, inclusive solutions. UNHCR and its partners have convened regional consultations and thematic briefings throughout the year to prepare for this meeting, emphasizing stateless-led participation, protection systems, and long-term financing. The current phase prioritizes translating policy into practice and ensuring that no community remains legally invisible.

Current Situation

17

In 2025, the global response to statelessness and legal limbo has entered a defining stage. The #IBelong Campaign, launched in 2014 to end statelessness within a decade, concluded last year. It raised awareness, mobilized stakeholders, and brought the issue into international focus. Now, the priority is implementation. The Global Alliance to End Statelessness, launched in late 2024, reflects this transition. Backed by more than 100 governments, civil society organizations, and stateless-led groups, the Alliance supports legal reform, improved civil registration, and practical tools to reduce and prevent statelessness.⁵ Its working groups, formed in early 2025, are focused on protecting stateless persons, ending childhood statelessness, and addressing discrimination in nationality law.



Returned IDPs in East Timor

At the center of this work are people. Statelessness is not confined to one region, and it is not caused by a single policy. It results from gaps in law, discrimination, displacement, and prolonged inaction. In Asia, members of the Rohingya community remain stateless under Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law. More than one million now live in camps in Bangladesh without a clear path to return, resettlement, or integration.⁶ In Thailand, government-led birth registration efforts have expanded to include children born to refugees and migrants, but many still face barriers to acquiring legal identity.

In the Middle East, Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria, and other host countries continue to live without recognized nationality. Although some hold travel documents issued by the Palestinian Authority, these do not confer full legal rights. As a result, many rely on humanitarian support from UNRWA, with no durable legal solution in sight.⁷

In Africa, statelessness is often linked to displacement, conflict, and weak documentation systems. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more than seven million people have been displaced by ongoing violence. Many lack birth certificates or legal identity, increasing their vulnerability to exclusion.⁸ In response, UNHCR is working with national authorities to improve registration systems and legal access. In West Africa, a 2025 joint work plan between the ECOWAS Court and UNHCR aims to expand access to legal identity and improve regional coordination.

In Europe, the war in Ukraine has intensified the need for documentation, especially for people who were already undocumented. The Regional Refugee Response Plan for 2025–2026 includes efforts to prevent statelessness and ensure access to protection and nationality.⁹ In Latvia and Estonia, naturalization remains slow and often inaccessible for many Russian-speaking residents. In the Western Balkans,

Roma communities continue to face exclusion from birth registration systems, limiting access to public services and legal protections.¹⁰

In the Americas, the legacy of legal exclusion continues to affect thousands. In the Dominican Republic, people of Haitian descent remain stateless more than a decade after a 2013 court ruling stripped them of citizenship retroactively. Although legal pathways exist, many face barriers to accessing documentation.¹¹ In



UNHCR and its partners provide support to people in the areas recently retaken by the Government of Ukraine

the United States, an estimated 200,000 people live in statelessness or legal limbo. Without a formal determination procedure, many are unable to regularize their status or access basic rights and protections.¹²

Looking ahead, the High-Level Officials Meeting (HLOM), scheduled for December 15 to 17, 2025, in Geneva, presents a critical opportunity to assess global progress.¹³ Governments and international partners will review their commitments under the Global Compact on Refugees and report on past pledges. As of this year, more than 3,300 pledges have been submitted worldwide. Nearly 90 percent of 2019 pledges and 22 percent of 2023 pledges are fulfilled or underway.¹⁴ Some examples include Sweden granting nationality to over 33,000 stateless people, Ethiopia expanding refugee inclusion through digital ID systems, and Kyrgyzstan ensuring equal access to healthcare for stateless individuals.

Throughout 2025, UNHCR and its partners have hosted regional consultations, technical briefings, and thematic dialogues to prepare for the HLOM. These conversations have addressed topics such as civil documentation, birth registration, child protection, access to healthcare, and sustainable financing. The meeting is expected to emphasize implementation, cross-sector collaboration, and the inclusion of stateless communities in decision-making.

The tools, commitments, and frameworks now exist. What remains is to ensure that they are implemented effectively, equitably, and sustainably. Statelessness and legal limbo are not abstract problems. They affect people's ability to go to school, access healthcare, obtain a job, and live with dignity. The question is no longer whether the world can solve statelessness. The question is whether it will.

As delegates in this committee, your role is to evaluate what progress has been made and to think critically about what still needs to be done. Consider where legal gaps remain. Identify which communities are still unrecognized. Propose solutions that are inclusive, practical, and grounded in the realities faced by those affected. The work starts here.

Directives / QARMAs

What obligations, if any, should states have to provide legal status or nationality to stateless individuals residing within their borders long-term?

What is the role of the international community when statelessness is not the result of state failure, but state intent?

What specific mechanisms can help states with limited capacity (legal, financial, or institutional) meet international expectations on preventing and resolving statelessness?

How can UNHCR and its partners provide immediate protection and access to rights for stateless people, without relying on existing exclusionary legal systems?

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