

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/C.2/290
8 March 1951

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Twelfth session
Item 16 (e)

REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS

Statement submitted by the World Jewish Congress, a non-governmental organization granted consultative status in Category B

The Secretary-General has received the following statement which is circulated in full with the approval of the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations in accordance with paragraph 23 (e) of Council resolution 288 B (X):

Dated: 23 February 1951
Received: 26 February 1951

1. The World Jewish Congress respectfully addresses a most earnest appeal to the Council to renew its invitation to States "to examine sympathetically applications for naturalization submitted by stateless persons habitually resident in their territory" (resolution 319 B (XI), Section III). Unhappily the request for sympathetic consideration of such applications made by the Council at its eleventh session has, so far as we can ascertain, made no appreciable difference to the practice of States which have a tradition of granting nationality by discretion of their administration; nor do the replies on the subject received by the Secretary-General encourage the hope of any early amelioration of this attitude. The international community cannot, in our respectful submission, leave the matter there.
2. We are aware and are deeply appreciative of the effort now in process to secure, on the basis of exhaustive and expert inquiry, the formulation of agreed international measures for the solution of the problem of statelessness. But this effort is not likely to be soon completed; it may well take many years.

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In the meantime many thousands of innocent people against whom there is nothing except that they are the victims of an unhappy destiny must continue to bear the disabilities of statelessness. People who have lived in their countries of settled residence for many years, are often the parents of nationals of these countries, and have honourably discharged every civic obligation, are denied naturalization. And these conditions prevail not in remote and primitive areas but in some of the most highly civilized and democratic states in Western Europe.

3. It is in the power of these States, if they choose to exercise it, to solve the problem of their own stateless inhabitants. We are convinced that objective inquiry would disclose that there are no obstacles to ameliorative action which lie in the persons who are at present stateless. We submit that to adhere too rigidly to the existing system is in practice to nullify the spirit and intent of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to a nationality." Moreover, the experience of such powers as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and others, has demonstrated beyond all doubt the value of a system which makes naturalization available to resident aliens of good character under conditions which are reasonable and humane.

4. Accordingly, we venture to make the proposal that the Council should renew its invitation to the governments and on this occasion draw once more attention to the obligations created by the proclamation of the Universal Declaration with their support.

5. Moreover, in view of the lack of authentic official information on the magnitude of the problem of statelessness, we feel that it would be of great advantage if the United Nations were to undertake a study designed to establish the extent of the problem in the various countries, the causes which have brought it into existence, and the legislative enactments and administrative measures under which it is dealt with in the various countries. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the Secretary-General should be invited to cause a study to be made of statelessness and the causes which have produced it and to make a compilation of all relevant laws, regulations and administrative practices in regard to naturalization. In making this study, it is suggested that the Secretary-General should be authorized to invite the assistance of specialized bodies, including the International Refugee Organization and the High Commissioner for Refugees, and consultative non-governmental organizations with knowledge or experience in this field.