

Alþingi
Erindi nr. Þ 133/1206
komudagur 26.2.2007

UNHCR
Regional Office for the Baltic
and Nordic Countries

Ynglingagatan 14, 6th fl.
SE-113 47 Stockholm
Sweden

Tel.: +46 8 457 4880
Fax: +46 8 457 4887
E-mail: swest@unhcr.org

23 February 2007

Our code: ROBNC/OUT/018/07

Re: **Proposed Amendments to Citizenship Act**

Dear Committee Members,

The UNHCR Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic Countries (UNHCR) welcomes the opportunity to comment upon certain proposed amendments to the Icelandic Citizenship Act (Proposed Amendments), as concerns issues related to persons falling within UNHCR's mandate including, inter alia, refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons.

In these regards, UNHCR notes with appreciation the consistently close working relationship between Iceland and UNHCR for the benefit of persons of concern to UNHCR. UNHCR likewise notes with appreciation the strong support provided to UNHCR by the Icelandic Red Cross, whom UNHCR continues to regard as its operational consultant on legal matters in Iceland related to persons falling within UNHCR's mandate.

As concerns the Proposed Amendments, UNHCR has an interest in such legislation in line with the supervisory responsibility entrusted to UNHCR by the UN General Assembly, as well as pursuant to, inter alia, Article 35 of the 1951 Convention Relating to Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto.

UNHCR has taken note of, and discussed the comments of the Icelandic Red Cross on the Proposed Amendments and in general terms endorses those comments. Especially as concerns the issue of statelessness, UNHCR continues to urge Icelandic accession to the 1954 Convention Related to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and/or, at a minimum, to take the opportunity in the context of the Proposed Amendments to include the definition of statelessness and the various key provisions of the 1954 Convention including, inter alia, Articles 4, 7, 8, 12-32, as well as the key provisions of the 1961 Convention including, inter alia, Articles 1-13.

In addition to the importance of the Statelessness Conventions in and of themselves, UNHCR notes the beneficial effect the Icelandic accession would have on the strengthening of the global legal framework with regard to the reduction of statelessness.

In closing, UNHCR stands ready to further assist Iceland in assessing the Proposed Amendments or subsequent revised proposals should this be deemed helpful.

Yours sincerely,


Machiko Kondo
Regional Representative

Allsherjarnefnd Althingis
Alþingi
150 Reykjavík
ICELAND