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African Union Commission



Republic of South Africa

Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration

Concept Note

Draft

**Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and
Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)**

“Improving Institutional and Human Infrastructure”

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I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

1. The First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration was held from 13 to 14 August 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Conference was preceded by the preparatory meeting of experts, held from 10 to 12 August 2010 at the same venue. The three pan-African institutions with substantive statistical activities, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) were the lead agencies for coordinating and managing the organization of the conference, jointly with the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in its capacity as host. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Health Metrics Network (HMN) and other regional and international organizations all assisted in organizing the Conference.

2. In a landmark gathering, the Conference brought together over 40 African Ministers responsible for civil registration to discuss the status, challenges and future actions for reforming and improving civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems. The Conference endorsed a resolution addressing strategic and policy issues on reforming and improving CRVS systems on the continent (annex 1). The Conference also endorsed a medium-term regional plan to be implemented from 2010 to 2015 with interventions and activities to accelerate and improve CRVS systems on the continent.

3. The Second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration is being organized in accordance with the resolution of the First Conference, which requested that the Conference should be institutionalized as a standing regional forum to be organized every two years. The Government of the Republic of South Africa is hosting the Second Conference in September 2012.

1.1 Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS)

4. APAI-CRVS emerged from the need to bring various CRVS initiatives on the continent together under a common and consolidated policy and advocacy framework. It is a regional programme devised according to CRVS international standards, principles and recommendations. It also stemmed from the political commitment and policy directives of ministers in charge of civil registration, who had called for a holistic and integrated approach to reforming and improving CRVS systems on the continent.

5. The overall objective of APAI-CRVS is to provide management and programmatic guidance to the regional agenda to reform and improve CRVS systems. Specifically, the regional programme will provide guidance on institutional and operational linkages, workflows and results management mechanisms in a more comprehensive and holistic manner, encompassing the inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral interfaces of CRVS systems.

6. APAI-CRVS recognizes the socio-economic and political diversities of African countries and thus the need for a more decentralized approach to promoting and enhancing knowledge and creativity. This would help address the challenges to improving CRVS systems, taking into account the specific circumstances of countries.

7. APAI-CRVS is anchored on the following major strategic directives:

- (a) Promoting country ownership and leadership;
- (b) Promoting coordination and integration between Civil Registration Authorities (CRAs) and National Statistics Offices (NSOs);
- (c) Promoting systematic and coordinated approaches
- (d) Promoting phase-based, holistic and integrated approaches
- (e) Constituting a strong regional policy and advocacy fora;
- (f) Building the capacities of national CRVS focal institutions
- (g) Promoting partnership at country and regional levels
- (h) Strengthening the regional CRVS Secretariat at ECA

8. APAI-CRVS addresses these strategic directives, work processes and monitoring mechanisms of the regional initiative. The programme leaves the routine operational issues and activity breakdown to the medium-term and follow-up plans and focuses on policy directives and programme guidelines that enable policy-makers and programme managers to take up visionary leadership roles at regional and country levels. The programme also focuses on addressing major conceptual and programmatic issues and tries to harmonize different interests and programme interventions from various actors.

1.2 What has been achieved since the First Conference of African Ministers?

9. The seed for the regional initiative planted at the Tanzania Regional Workshop on Civil Registration in June 2009 evolved into a comprehensive regional plan at the First Conference, where the Ministers' statements touched on a political and policy directive. The Conference considered CRVS as a key development agenda for the region and urged all development partners to support the initiative at the regional and country levels. There was overwhelming response from partners who decided to come together to support the implementation of APAI-CRVS in a coordinated manner. A core group, comprising ECA, AfDB, AUC, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR and HMN, was set up to coordinate implementation of the resolution of the conference, including the Medium-Term Plan (MTP) endorsed by the Ministers. The Conference further requested ECA to institutionalize the initiative and create a substantive post with appropriate support staff to ensure the sustainability of ongoing efforts to improve CRVS systems in Africa. Currently, there is a CRVS Secretariat at the ECA African Centre for Statistics (ACS) to perform day-to-day functions and support the core group in coordinating and implementing the MTP. The human resource requirement of the Secretariat is provided by ECA and AfDB. The interventions

and activities undertaken by the CRVS Secretariat are guided by the MTP. The main activities carried out in the past two years and those in progress include:

(a) The post-ministerial conference expert group meeting conducted in Addis Ababa in January 2011;

(b) The region-wide comprehensive CRVS assessment study on the status of CRVS systems in all member States. The preliminary report of this study was presented at the 7th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD);

(c) The preparation of two regional operational manuals on civil registration and vital statistics is in progress;

(d) Preparations for development of other regional operational manuals as per the medium-term plan schedule are underway;

(e) CRVS mainstreamed into regional statistics fora. The 7th ASSD meeting focused on CRVS and the third session of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa III) resolved a number of important policy issues from the statistics perspective;

(f) Regional CRVS core group involving key regional and international organizations established;

(g) Various conceptual and technical resource materials prepared and various expert discussions engaged in Technical assistance missions conducted in a few countries and advisory services provided through various channels;

(h) Web-based CRVS monitoring database system developed;

(i) Partnership agreement document prepared and circulated for endorsement by key development partners;

(j) Guiding manual for the organization of the ministerial conference prepared;

(k) Resource mobilization activities undertaken at various times to sponsor the different regional fora on CRVS; and

(l) Preparatory activities for organizing the Second Conference of African Ministers are underway.

10. The activities accomplished since the inception of the regional initiative in mid-2009 have focused on raising awareness, encouraging commitment, and developing conceptual and operational frameworks and technical and methodological materials as per the directives of the MTP and the resolutions of the Conference. Activities planned for 2012 and 2013 will build on past achievements and prepare for region-wide operations.

11. Detailed reports on each of the activities and outputs will be presented and discussed at the preparatory meeting of experts.

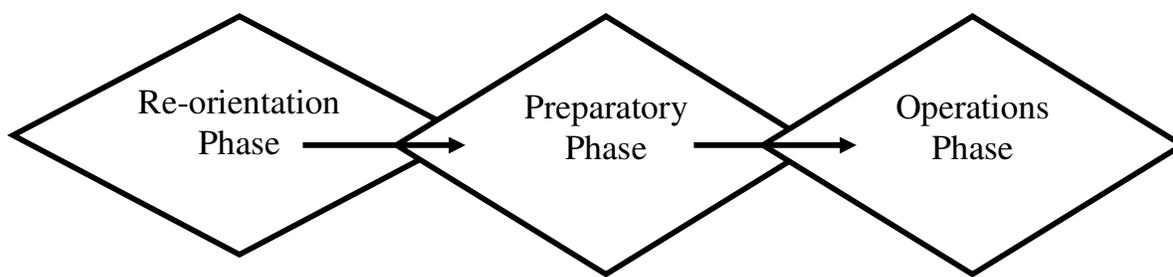
1.3 Phased-based approach to implementation

12. The June 2009 meeting held in the United Republic of Tanzania, which brought together civil registration and vital statistics experts from NSOs, addressed some of the fundamental impediments to improving registration systems in the region. Following the recommendations of the meeting, the ACS, as per the mandate given by the group of experts, initiated the preparation of an MTP, in close collaboration with AfDB. The workshop delegated ECA, AfDB, the AUC along with other key development partners, to lead the regional initiative and ensure proper implementation and monitoring of the recommendations of the workshop.

13. One of the most important initiatives was the organization of the First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration held from 13 to 14 August 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The declarations made at the Conference are providing the policy basis for moving the regional agenda forward. The MTP endorsed by the Ministers, which was finalized by the experts in January 2011, is currently serving as the CRVS regional operating document for all CRVS actors and stakeholders in Africa. The programmatic approach looks at the MTP from two angles: regional-level interventions and country-level operations with development partners playing a catalytic role at both levels. Furthermore, the programmatic vision of the MTP is to see countries operating their CRVS systems in harmony with international principles and recommendations and regional directives.

14. APAI-CRVS, as shown in Chart 1, has been conceptualized to be implemented in three phases: the re-orientation phase, the preparatory phase and the operations phase. This implementation approach will be applied at both the regional and country levels. Countries are expected to move from one phase to another as depicted in the chart. They also need to check whether their systems fulfill the requirements of every phase. For example, a country may have reached a registration completion level of more than 90 per cent and is producing vital statistics from civil registration systems, and yet have a weak service delivery system. The country therefore has to review its service delivery system and take steps to improve it in the preparatory phase. Each country is expected to devise its plans and programmes in line with this implementation approach. The transition from one phase to the next will require accomplishing or meeting core outputs and deliverables for the earlier phase. These phase-based interventions and activities are expected to provide the means for managing and monitoring the progress of each country towards the regional targets as set in the MTP.

Chart 1: Phase-based programme implementation



15. The deliverables and outputs expected to be accomplished in each of the phases at the regional level will help prepare the countries to meet the targets set in the MTP and establish and maintain efficient CRVS systems. The re-orientation phase focuses on obtaining commitment from participating institutions to improve CRVS systems. In this phase, implementing institutions are expected to move away from past project-based approaches and embark on a holistic approach to improving CRVS systems. The re-orientation phase has more or less been completed at the regional level, with the organization of the regional CRVS workshop in the United Republic of Tanzania, the successful completion of the First Conference and the creation of regional statistical fora that support the CRVS initiative as presented in the recent joint meetings of the 7th ASSD and the 3rd StatCom-Africa in Cape Town, South Africa. Similar activities are expected to be carried out by each member State to implement the re-orientation phase at the country level.

16. The preparatory phase, at the regional level, will focus on initiatives and activities for preparing countries to transit to the operations phase. It will deal with instituting practical reform measures to improve technical, institutional and human resource development. It will also address management systems and a wide range of capacity-building activities that are essential prerequisites for efficient operation of the systems. The outputs from the Second Conference and the 8th ASSD are expected to contribute to this phase. Similar activities are expected to be undertaken by each member State to complete the preparatory phase at the country level.

17. The operation phase is the third phase in the implementation of APAI-CRVS that includes implementing the plan of action, monitoring results, improving efficiency and maintaining the system. During this phase, each of the countries is expected to show results in terms of moving CRVS to the required completeness level and delivering efficient services. The discussions and outputs from the Second Conference and the 8th ASSD are expected to provide technical and policy guidance for implementing and managing the operations phase at regional and country levels

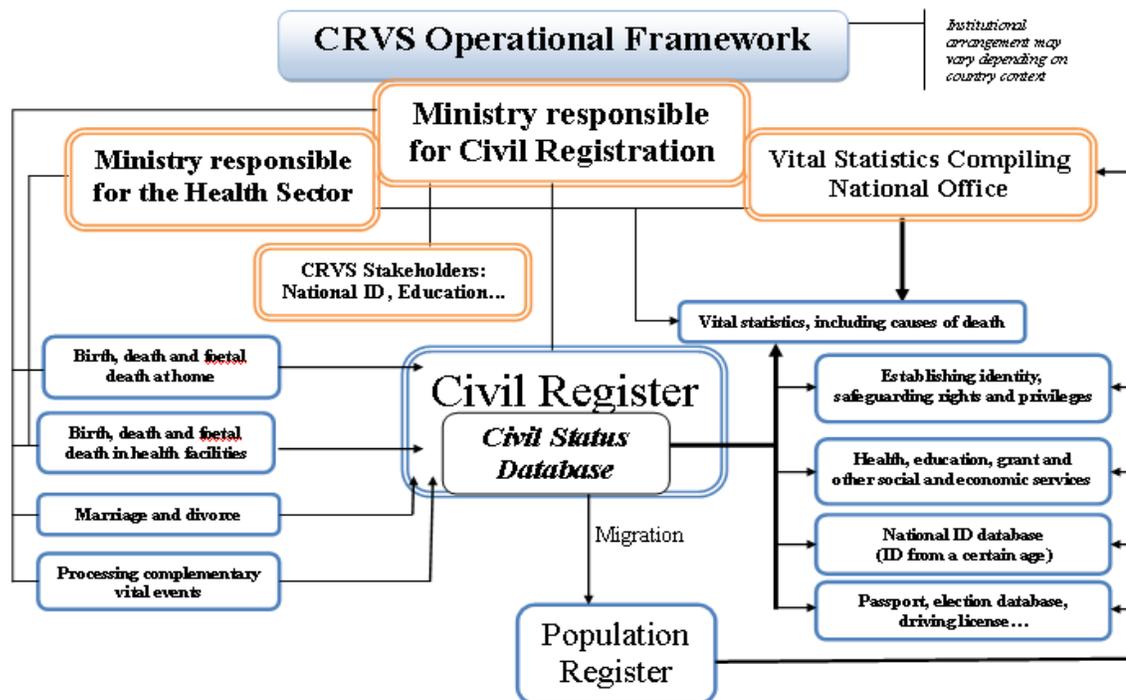
18. The preparatory expert meeting to be held prior to the Second Conference is expected to elaborate the different phases and prepare a comprehensive analytical framework and roadmap that will be translated into a policy statement by the Ministers.

1.4 CRVS Operations and linkages

19. The conditions and circumstances of the occurrence of various vital events are affected by diverse social, cultural and religious factors. Vital events can occur in different places. For example, births, deaths and foetal deaths can occur either at home or in health facilities. Similarly, marriages can occur in religious institutions or in courts. Events can even occur in circumstances such as conflicts, accidents and natural disasters. Appropriate institutional and human infrastructure and operational procedures need to be established to capture all these diverse events. On the other hand, civil registration operations need to be linked and interfaced with various other systems that cater for the demands of individuals, households and institutions in the country. Hence, registration operations and service provisions of vital events need to follow systematic work flows and procedures and aim at producing high-quality products and services at all levels.

20. Civil registration involves interactions between individuals, households and institutions. These interactions and inter-linkages can be conceptualized into a holistic and integrated operational framework by clearly identifying products and services, the agencies that are responsible for delivering them and the beneficiaries who use them. The development of such a comprehensive and holistic framework calls for a thorough analysis and conceptualization of the interactions and work processes. Chart 2 shows a complete operational framework depicting the multi-dimensional linkages and inter-play of CRVS systems with other systems. The framework reflects a CRVS system that a country should aspire to achieve so as to attain complete registration of vital events and also maintain an efficient service delivery system in a given socio-economic and cultural context. The framework depicts the continental aspiration to move each of the member States towards the regional objectives and targets as set in the MTP. Hence, countries are expected to adopt the proposed framework which would reflect their commitment to supporting implementation of the regional programme.

Chart 2: Complete civil registration and vital statistics systems and their multi-sectoral services and linkages



1.5 Civil registration and its linkages with national identification systems

21. With increased international security concerns in recent years, more and more countries have been trying to tighten their external and internal security systems. Countries are increasingly implementing national identity registration systems as one of the measures towards achieving this objective. Information and communication technology is playing a catalytic role in the implementation of these systems. These computerized identity databases are opening up new opportunities for promoting e-governance, including, service delivery of various government programmes such as health and old-age pensions. Some countries are working towards reforming their laws to provide legal sanctity to digitally-created and maintained records. However sophisticated these systems are made to be, the primacy of a complete and fool-proof civil registration system for the national identity system is yet to be recognized and fully understood by many of these countries. There is a need to clearly lay down the processes and protocols for entering records and retrieving them from the database. The only way this can be achieved is by making an organic link between the national identity database and civil registration system. The conference will showcase some of the successful ventures in some countries and discuss challenges in this area.

1.6 Civil registration and its linkages with health systems

22. The health sector has a critical and valuable role to play in improving civil registration, especially for birth and death events, and recording causes of death. Not only does the health system facilitate reporting of events to the civil registration system through its institutional mechanisms such as the medical institutions and outreach health service workers, it also benefits from civil registration records and compiled data based on such records.

23. One of the possible innovative strategies that a country can adopt for improving outreach services for registration is establishing institutional linkages with the existing health delivery services network. Health workers provide various services such as antenatal and post-partum care and immunization services at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries and are closest to events such as births and deaths. These health workers, therefore, can function as interface between families and registration centres. An institutional mechanism linking the two systems with appropriately defined processes and protocols can be built for reporting of such events.

24. The United Nations¹ guideline emphatically illustrates the importance of birth records to the health sector as follows: *“Public health programmes of post-natal care for the mother and the child usually have their starting point in the birth register and the corresponding birth indexes. Next to their legal role, this is perhaps the most important use to which birth records can be placed ...”*. Likewise, the death register helps to promote the effectiveness of health services. *“Control programmes for infectious diseases within the family and within the community often depend on the death-registration report for their initiation. For example, measures to find cases of tuberculosis within a family may be undertaken upon registration of the death of a member from that disease. In areas where major epidemic diseases have been eradicated, the appearance of a death from one of these causes will set in motion a chain of actions designed to uncover all possible contacts which the decedent may have had during the time he had the disease²”*

25. The regional initiative to improve CRVS is clearly linked to the objectives and recommendations of the United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health³ that was established on the request of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to coordinate a process to determine the most effective international institutional arrangements for global reporting, oversight and accountability on women’s and children’s health. The work of the Commission was built on the fundamental human right of every woman and child to the highest attainable standard of health and on the critical

¹ Handbook of Vital Statistics Methods, UN, 1955.

² *abid*

³ Final Report of the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health, United Nations. Leaders from a wide range of stakeholders including governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector, foundations and academia have served as Commissioners with strong support from the United Nations Secretary-General. The co-chairs of the Commission were H.E. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and H.E. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada. The Vice-Chair is the Director-General of the World Health Organization. Ministers of Health of Senegal, Ethiopia and Rwanda were among the Commissioners. The Commission delivered its final report to the meeting of the World Health Assembly in late May 2011.

importance of achieving equity in health. In order to achieve these objectives the Commission prioritized 10 recommendations, the first of which is related to civil registration:

“Vital events: By 2015, all countries have taken significant steps to establish a system for registration of births, deaths and causes of death, and have well functioning health information systems that combine data from facilities, administrative sources and surveys”

26. The Commission’s report thoroughly reviewed and analyzed the status of civil registration systems in the developing world and the implication of inadequate birth and death registrations and certification of causes of death on monitoring results and taking accountability measures in the health sector in general. The report concludes that *“there can be no accountability without timely, reliable and accessible health information and data. ... countries most off-track for women’s and children’s health generally have the weakest civil registration systems.”* Dr. Margaret Chan, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, requested all partners to support countries and give priority to strengthening civil registration systems. She underlined that *“Timely, reliable and accessible health information is critical for accountability. Having this solid information at country level is essential to measuring and monitoring results. One of our top priorities must be investing in helping countries build the capacity needed to capture this health information – that means giving them the financial and technical resources required to monitor things such as births, deaths and causes of deaths and achieve the accountability revolution needed to save women and children from dying”*. The report emphasizes the need for long-term political commitment and investment in building civil registration systems so as to deliver accurate and reliable data on individual records and vital statistics.

27. The Commission’s work embraces the following key accountability principles that are in line with the strategic directives of the regional CRVS initiative:

- (a) Focusing on national leadership and ownership of results;
- (b) Strengthening country capacity to monitor and evaluate;
- (c) Reducing the reporting burden by aligning efforts with systems countries use to monitor and evaluate their national health strategies;
- (d) Strengthening and harmonizing existing international mechanisms to track progress on all commitments made.

28. In the African region, improving CRVS systems has been accepted as a developmental challenge that needs to be addressed at the highest political decision-making level. The continent is making efforts to put all the necessary political, partnership, institutional and technical structures in place to move the regional CRVS agenda forward. A holistic and harmonized approach is being used to address civil registration requirements and services, including for the health and other social sectors. Hence, the objectives and recommendations of the United Nations Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health in the African region should be integrated with the CRVS regional initiative. Accordingly, the Second Conference of African Ministers is expected to consider, discuss and provide policy directives on the implementation mechanisms and strategies for integrating the global initiative on information and accountability for women’s

and children's health into the regional CRVS initiative that would lead to organically linking the civil registration and health systems. Some good examples from Africa will be presented at the conference and challenges in establishing such linkages will be discussed.

1.7 The Seventh ASSD and the Conference of African Ministers interfaced

29. As per the recommendation of the First Conference of African Ministers, the 6th ASSD held from 31 October to 2 November 2010 in Cairo resolved to focus on CRVS in the next five symposia. ASSD and the Conference of African Ministers were expected to feed into each other. The Conference was to be held every two years while the ASSD would be held every year. In order to bring more impact and coordinate the different initiatives, it was envisaged that the two regional fora working on the same issue would be interfaced, at least for the next five years. Accordingly, the 7th ASSD and follow-up meetings were planned to be linked to the Conference of Ministers. It was decided that the exercise to link the two regional fora would be initiated from the 7th ASSD and guided by a comprehensive roadmap.

30. Technically, the interface between the two fora starts from the selection and assignment of focus areas or themes for the meetings. Accordingly, proposals of themes or focus areas for ASSD and the Conference of African Ministers were presented at the CRVS expert group meeting held in Addis Ababa, in January 2011. It was suggested that the two meetings should share the same focus area/theme when the ASSD overlaps with the Conference year. Accordingly, ASSD and the Conference will have the same focus area in 2012, 2014 and 2016. The proposal was endorsed by the experts' group meeting and enriched through consultation with development partners. The proposed themes are expected to be endorsed by the Ministers at their second conference (annex - 4).

31. It would be important to recognize the inter-dependence of the focus areas and the need to discuss and debate all aspects of CRVS with a preponderance of the focus areas in terms of the time allotted.

1.8 Why focus on institutional and human infrastructure challenges?

32. The civil registration system provides the basic legal document that helps the individual to prove his or her identity and nationality and claim his or her individual rights and privileges. However, in most countries, the system is only perceived to be the source of birth, death, marriage or divorce certificates and nothing beyond. In most countries, civil registration institutions are seen as simple administrative branches within the government structure. It has to be recognized that civil registration is about building good governance. Indeed, its contribution to building a modern and accountable public administration system in a country is indisputable. Monitoring the civil status of individuals and managing the human capital of a country depends on the availability of a systematically organized national database from a reliable civil registration system. Also, civil registration must be high on Africa's development agenda because of its value as a source of population dynamics and basic demographic and social indicators, including the production of many of the Millennium Development Goal indicators.

33. Civil registration structures in most African countries were set up without taking the multi-faceted objectives and services of CRVS systems indicated above into account. Despite the important role that civil registration plays in various sectors and national and sub-national development programmes, civil registration offices in most countries are positioned in the periphery of the public administration system. The same holds true for vital statistics. Most NSOs treat the compilation of vital statistics as the by-product of an administrative system without giving due emphasis to its inter-linkages with the operations and management of civil registration systems. Since the civil registration system was not yielding the much needed vital statistics, the NSOs, over the years, got disenchanted and in many of the countries, even disengaged themselves from the system and looked for alternative methods for obtaining vital statistics. This included collection of data through demographic surveys and censuses and also using indirect methods to calculate various vital rates (especially from censuses). Meanwhile, the civil registration offices in the countries continued to run the civil registration system as part of routine administration; in some cases, totally oblivious of the fact that vital statistics were an integral part of the system. As a result, the institutional and human infrastructure of both civil registration and vital statistics currently prevailing in most countries are highly inadequate to meet the requirements of the regional initiative to produce the expected results.

34. As shown above, the regional CRVS initiative is prepared to launch the operations phase at the regional level during the Second Conference of African Ministers. Reforming and improving CRVS institutional and human resource is considered the most important transitory work in moving the initiative towards the operations phase. The First ASDD on CRVS gave priority to institutional and human infrastructure problems and challenges, as those were the primary intervention areas that needed to be addressed in most countries across the region. Likewise, the Second Conference of African Ministers that will focus on the same topic is expected to address policy and political issues that would speed up processes to achieve planned results at regional and country levels.

II. RATIONALE

35. The First Conference, in its declaration, recommended that the Conference of African Ministers should be institutionalized as a standing regional platform that meets every two years. Accordingly, the Second Conference is to be held in the Republic of South Africa in 2012. The rationale for organizing the Second Conference is as follows:

- (a) Review progress since the First Conference;
- (b) Sustain the initiative;
- (c) Strategize interventions and country-level operations; and
- (d) Provide policy and political directives for future engagements.

III. OBJECTIVES

36. The regional initiative to reform and improve CRVS systems in Africa using a more holistic and integrated approach was mooted in 2009 at the Tanzania Regional Workshop on Civil Registration. The primary objective of the regional workshop was to create awareness and recognize the need for mobilizing political commitment from national governments. One of the key drawbacks of past initiatives and interventions in civil registration was that it was largely driven as a statistical function and excluded ministries in charge of civil registration. The paradigm shift in the approach to reform the CRVS needed the involvement of high-level national policy-makers and decision making bodies. The first ever ministerial meeting that brought more than 40 ministers in charge of civil registration was the first step to reforming the process. The Conference of African Ministers set the regional agenda and declared CRVS as the continent's developmental challenge. All these developments were part of the preparatory phase activities of the new regional CRVS initiative.

37. As indicated before, reform and improvement of CRVS in Africa could only be achieved through coordinated and harmonized efforts at two levels – interventions at regional-level and country-level operations. In all these processes development partners are expected to play a catalytic role by providing support at the different levels.

38. The overall objective of the Second Conference is to mobilize countries to transit to the operations phase. The regional initiative expects each country to undergo some fundamental reform programmes and complete some essential preparatory activities. For instance, countries are expected to conduct a comprehensive CRVS assessment study based on which they are to review their legal framework, prepare a comprehensive plan and take appropriate measures to remove systemic, institutional and human infrastructure challenges.

39. The specific objectives of the Conference are to:

- (a) Review progress made since the First Conference;
- (b) Call on countries to address systemic, institutional and human infrastructural challenges;
- (c) Call on countries to integrate civil registration operations and services with health information management and national identification systems;
- (d) Strategize the acceleration of the completion of the reorientation and preparatory phases in all member States; and
- (e) Strategize the monitoring of progress and mechanisms for taking accountability measures at the highest level.

IV. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

40. The Conference is expected to deliver the following four major outcomes:

(a) Enhanced commitment of national governments towards the operation phase. The Ministers are expected to discuss the strategies and policy measures to be taken to accelerate completion of the various preparatory activities in each member State so as to move the operation phase forward. The results of the regional CRVS assessment study are expected to provide basic information on the status and gaps of CRVS in each member State;

(b) Enhanced commitment towards a results-based resource allocation and monitoring system. Different development partners are committed to supporting the regional initiative through regional channels or direct support to the countries. At the Conference, ministers and development partners are expected to discuss results-based coordinated and harmonized resource management systems and provide policy directives on the most efficient and effective ways of implementation;

(c) Establish a regional monitoring and accountability mechanism. The Conference is expected to establish a high-level inter-ministerial regional committee that will monitor progress and take appropriate policy measures to help maintain accountability for results at the national and regional levels. Members of the regional ministerial committee are expected to be drawn from key ministries involved in CRVS systems. The members will be represented primarily from ministers in charge of civil registration, ministers responsible for national statistics and ministers of health. The terms of reference and number and composition of members of the regional monitoring and accountability ministerial committee will be proposed by experts from member States; and

(d) Endorse resolutions and recommendations. The high-level Conference is expected to endorse resolutions and recommendations that will facilitate the transition of CRVS from the reorientation and preparatory phases to the operations phase in all member States.

V. CONFERENCE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

41. The strategy in the organization of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration will be based on the following operational stages:

(a) Conducting preparatory meeting of experts. Following the tradition of the First Conference, the preparatory meeting of experts will precede the ministerial segment. The primary objective of the experts' meeting is to prepare technical background documents and a preliminary draft of the resolutions and recommendations of the conference. The experts will review and analyze progress reports against agreed objectives and targets set in the MTP and policy directives of the First Conference. The CRVS core group member organizations will facilitate the organization of the expert meeting, jointly with the host country. The expert meeting is expected to last for three days;

(b) Establishing the joint conference organizing committee. The CRVS core group will form a joint conference organizing committee with the host government. In addition, the host country will form a national committee which will include all relevant government and non-government institutions that will guide the implementation of the conference activities;

(c) CRVS Secretariat Office at ECA. The Secretariat will lead and coordinate the technical preparations of the Conference, in consultation with the host Government. The Secretariat will also prepare a draft concept note, agenda and work programme, conceptual, technical and operational documents, PowerPoint presentations and progress reports and share these with core group members for finalization. The Secretariat and the host government, together with the core group, will lead and coordinate the organization of the preparatory meeting of experts;

(d) Mobilize development partners to sponsor country delegates. The CRVS core group members and the host government will communicate with potential partners and donors to mobilize support for sponsoring country delegates to participate in the expert meetings and Conference of Ministers;

(e) Endorsing resolutions and recommendations. The high-level Conference of Ministers will primarily engage in reviewing and then endorsing the draft resolutions and recommendations that are expected to lead and govern African civil registration and vital statistics systems for the coming years.

VI. ACTIVITIES

42. The activities surrounding the organization of the Conference could be broken down into the following three sub-categories: pre-conference, conference deliberation and post-conference activities.

43. The pre-conference activities will primarily entail organizing the expert meeting and making all necessary travel, protocol and administrative arrangements for the high-level Conference participants. All technical preparations required for the Conference will also be completed during this time. In terms of outputs, it is expected to produce the official documents that will be presented to the Conference of Ministers. It is also expected to make the necessary preparations for travel, protocol and administrative arrangements for the high-level Conference participants. The CRVS Secretariat, the core group members and the host government will facilitate preparatory activities for the Conference. Specific task assignments will be communicated among different actors.

44. The Conference deliberations will cover activities that will be conducted under the Conference agenda. At the official opening ceremony, regional organizations will present reports on initiatives and completed and ongoing activities on civil registration and vital statistics systems in the region in the past years. There will also be official statements from delegates of selected countries. Technical deliberations and review of reports and discussion on policy and institutional issues will take most of the remaining time of the first day. On the second day, the ministers are expected to discuss the proposed draft resolutions and recommendations and endorse them.

45. In terms of post-conference activities, travel and protocol arrangements of the return of conference participants to their respective countries will be arranged immediately. As a follow-up to the high-level Conference, the Conference organizers and key development

partners will carry out several activities as per the resolutions and recommendations of the Conference. Accordingly, the first follow-up activity will be for the Secretariat to publish and disseminate the resolutions and recommendations and facilitate the modalities for the implementation of the outcomes of the conference. In addition, the secretariat and core group will prepare an official report on the proceedings of the Conference and disseminate it to all member States and participating delegates.

VII. ORGANIZERS OF THE CONFERENCE

46. Civil registration and vital statistics are of interest to various stakeholders working on human development and welfare of individuals and societies, legal and human rights issues, public health, public sector reforms and administrations, demographic and health statistics, monitoring of development results and research. At the national level, ministries and institutions engaged at the policy level as well as those that provide services in the justice, decentralization and local administration, health, statistics and social affairs departments are the major stakeholders and custodians of the systems. Likewise, at the regional and global level, organizations and agencies working on human development and welfare constitute the resource base for strengthening the systems in the region. Accordingly, the Conference is expected to be organized with the contribution and support of these stakeholders that would benefit from its outcomes.

47. The Conference will be jointly organized by the CRVS core group member institutions, which include ECA, AfDB, AUC, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, INDEPTH, WHO and the Health Metrics Network (HMN) and the host country. In addition, UNSD and other development partners with a special interest in either civil registration or vital statistics will provide technical and financial support. The Government of the Republic of South Africa is hosting the Conference under the leadership of the Department of Home Affairs.

48. On the host Government side, every effort will be made to rally the support and partnership of various key stakeholders, including but not limited to the ministries of health, finance and economic development, women or gender affairs, capacity-building, education, the human rights commission, the national statistics association and prominent non-governmental organizations. The ministries or departments in charge of civil registration, statistics and health are expected to jointly lead the process and coordinate activities.

49. ECA and the host Government will extend formal invitations to potential regional and global development partners requesting their support and partnership in organizing the Conference.

VIII. PARTICIPANTS

50. The high-level Conference of Ministers is expected to gather 250 to 300 participants, including the 54 African Ministers responsible for civil registration. The Conference is expected to be officially opened by a high-level official of the Republic of South Africa. The United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ECA, the President of AfDB, the Chairperson of the AUC and the Minister of the Department of Home Affairs of the Republic of South Africa will deliver welcome statements and remarks to the Conference.

Invited Ministers of health and planning and finance from selected African countries are expected to deliver keynote statements to the conference. The participants include:

(a) All African Ministers responsible for civil registration in the 54 member States will be invited to attend the Conference. Heads of NSOs and registrars general of all member States will also be invited;

(b) Selected senior civil registration technical experts from civil registration offices and vital statistics experts will also attend the expert group meeting and then attend the ministerial segment;

(c) Ministers of health and planning and finance of selected countries and experts of the health sector from countries will also attend the Conference;

(d) Representatives of regional, sub-regional and international organizations working on civil registration and/or vital statistics will be invited;

(e) African Ambassadors residing in South Africa, representatives of United Nations regional organizations and United Nations country offices and representatives of non-governmental organizations affiliated with civil registration will be invited to attend the opening ceremony;

(f) All interested development partners will be invited;

(g) Some selected countries from other regions will be invited to share their experience;

(h) Representatives of sub-regional organizations, professional associations, training institutions and academia and a few young statisticians will also participate in the conference.

51. Participants to the expert meeting will comprise 25 to 30 experts representing selected African countries, regional training institutions, selected regional and international organizations and academic and research institutions. The CRVS Secretariat, together with the core group, will identify the participants and make arrangements for their representation.

IX. VENUE AND DATE

52. The Conference will be convened in Durban, South Africa from 3 to 7 September 2012. The Conference of Ministers will be held from 6 to 7 September 2012 and this will be preceded by the preparatory meeting of experts from 3 to 5 September 2012.

Annex 1- Declaration of the 1st Ministerial Conference

1. We, African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, meeting for the first time in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 13 to 14 August 2010 at the instance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC);
2. Acknowledge that the theme of our first conference: *“Improved Civil Status Information for Efficient Public Administration and Generation of Vital Statistics for National Development and MDGs Monitoring in Africa”* is both timely and relevant for the achievement of Africa’s development and improvement of public service delivery to our people;
3. Convinced of the importance of civil registration for public policy, good governance, human rights, rights of children, and as a basis for reliable vital statistics;
4. Further acknowledge the importance and contribution of civil registration and vital statistics information for the implementation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa and the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and promoting the African Charter on Statistics;
5. However note with concern that despite the importance of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems and ongoing efforts, the majority of our countries still lack adequate, viable and complete systems.
6. Affirm the need for strong policy responses, including those aimed at improving CRVS systems as part of the ongoing reforms in our countries.
7. Take note of the recommendations of the 2009 Tanzania Regional Workshop on Strengthening Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa, the second session of the Statistical Commission for Africa, and the Addis Ababa Expert Group Meeting on Civil Registration, preceding this conference, to strengthen CRVS systems in Africa.
8. We Note that the challenge before us now is to continue mobilizing and rallying political commitment and leadership for the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa. In this regard, we fully endorse the recommendations of our experts on strategies for strengthening CRVS systems. In the light of these recommendations, we hereby resolve to:
 - 8.1. Take appropriate policy measures to facilitate the implementation of plans, programmes and initiatives for the reform and improvement of CRVS systems to achieve universal coverage and completeness, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of our countries. In this regard, we resolve to mainstream CRVS processes into national statistical development strategies and other national plans and programmes, including strengthening coordination of activities among various departments and ministries at national, sub- regional and regional levels;

- 8.2. Formulate laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory registration of vital events occurring within our countries, with guarantees for equal access to the system for all persons. In this regard, we commit to revise and update our CRVS laws and statistical legislation in line with international and regional guidelines and recommendations, by allocating adequate human and financial resources for this purpose;
 - 8.3. Intensify awareness-raising campaigns on the procedures and importance of CRVS systems, to ensure effective functioning of the systems.
9. We recognize the importance of partnerships and capacity-building to support national efforts to strengthen CRVS. In this regard, we call upon:
- 9.1 ECA, AfDB and AUC, as well as other development partners, to continue to support our efforts in capacity-building and mobilizing resources;
 - 9.2 ECA, AfDB and AUC to undertake an evaluation of national CRVS systems and finalize the draft medium-term regional plan and guidelines and report to the next session of the Conference of Ministers;
 - 9.3 The African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD), which has hitherto focused on mobilizing Africa to fully participate in the 2010 round of population and housing census, to give priority to mobilizing Africa to improve CRVS systems;
 - 9.4 ECA to consider establishing a substantive post on civil registration and vital statistics with appropriate support staff at the African Centre for Statistics to ensure the sustainability of ongoing efforts to improve CRVS systems in Africa;
 - 9.5 Universities, national and regional statistical and demographic training institutions to enhance or develop appropriate curricula for building capacity and improving CRVS systems in Africa;
 - 9.6 The health sector to align the health system with CRVS systems to improve coordination and sharing of data on births and deaths with assigned causes for all deaths, with national statistical offices and CRVS authorities;
 - 9.7 The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the Health Metrics Network (HMN) and other development partners to strengthen their support to regional and national CRVS initiatives and programmes, including aligning their assistance accordingly.
10. Lastly, we request the AUC to consider institutionalizing the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics as a standing regional

platform to meet biannually, for discussion and evaluation of political and policy issues related to civil registration and vital statistics in Africa.

11. We thank the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for hosting this successful Conference. We especially thank the Honourable Minister of Justice, His Excellency Mr. Berhan Hailu for his leadership in this endeavour to improve CRVS systems in Africa. We are particularly grateful to ECA, AfDB, AUC, the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), UNSD, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), HMN, and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for successfully organizing this important Conference.

Done in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the 14th day of August 2010.

Annex 2 – Major sectors and services affected by the incomplete civil registration systems

Absence of comprehensive and complete civil registration systems has multi-faceted implications on the socio-economic development endeavors of a country. Major sectors and services affected by the incomplete or inadequate nature of civil registration systems include:

i) Public administration services:

- Establishment of identity of individuals (name, date and place of birth, ...);
- Establishment and monitoring of citizenship;
- Implementation of National Identification Systems (NIS);
- Improvement of passport issuance and administration;
- Control and administration of immigration cases; and
- Planning, verification and administration of electoral functions (constituent formation, electoral registration, verification and database updating).

ii) Protection of children and women from abuses and exploitation:

- Establishment of identity of children (right to a name, nationality, parentage, ...);
- Proper management and documentation of adoption cases, recognition, legitimation, ...;
- Identification and administration of abandoned/orphaned children (including children who lost their parents due to HIV/AIDS);
- Protection of children from harmful traditional practices (early/child marriage, neglect of children with birth defects, ...);
- Establishment of rights to some benefits (birth grants, child care, family allowances, disability allowances, ...);
- Protection of children from child labour, child soldier, trafficking, child prostitution, ...;
- Protection of the rights of women during marriage; and
- Protection of the rights of children and women during dissolution of marriage.

iii) Administering civil matters and associated criminal cases in courts:

- Presiding paternity and maternity court cases;
- Administration of court cases concerning minor's;

- Administering juvenile delinquent court cases (including crimes that lead to death penalty);
- Declaration and termination of absence of persons;
- Administering marriage court cases;
- Administering divorce court cases;
- Testifying a death, specifically criminal cases; and
- Establishing identity and change of name.

iv) Provision of public health and education services:

- Post-natal care of mothers and children including nutrition and follow-up of low birth weight children;
- Other public health programmes such as provision and follow-up of vaccination, children born with defects, physically handicapped children, pre-mature infants not attended by physicians, attending delivery complications, family planning services,...; and
- Monitoring and control of infectious diseases including taking measures to find cases of epidemics and protection of all possible contacts for intervention purposes;
- Monitoring of school enrollment and evaluation of coverage of universal primary education at all levels;

v) Provision of current and continuous health and demographic statistics:

- Provision of current population estimates and projections starting from the smallest administrative unit that is valuable in planning, monitoring and evaluation of various development interventions such as primary health care, education, family planning, nutrition, public housing and etc.;
- Preparation and use of demographic and health indicators (infant and child mortality, maternal mortality, cause specific death rates, fertility indices, life expectancy ...) for all administrative units;
- Verification and validation of population and housing census results;
- Improving the quality of census and sample survey data;
- Establishment and maintenance of national population registers and databases; and
- Establishment and maintenance of causes of death classification as per the international recommendation (currently ICD-10 classification).

vi) Measurement and monitoring of MDGs:

Building conventional data sources for generating flow of statistics for most of the MDG indicators (for instance, measuring the indicators for achievement of universal primary education, reduction in child mortality,

improvements in maternal health, and reductions in prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases).

vii) Provision of epidemiological and other research data inputs:

Availability and use of civil registration records for scientific enquiries in prospective and retrospective longitudinal studies in the area of health, environment, genealogy, etc.

Annex 3 – CRVS on the Move in Africa – Transiting to the Operations Phase

DAR-ES-SALAAM (JUNE 2009) [REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS]	ADDIS ABABA (AUGUST 2010) [CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION]	SOUTH AFRICA (JAN AND SEPT 2012) [7 TH AFRICA SYMPOSIA FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (ASSD) AND 2 ND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE]		FUTURE ENGAGEMENTS	
		ASSD (JAN 2012)	MCCR (SEPT 2012)	WITHIN THE MEDIUM-TERM FRAMEWORK [UNTIL 2015]	BEYOND 2015
Low awareness and acknowledgment	Ministers and lower level officials acknowledged	NSO Directors committed to take CRVS as a regional focus area for the coming five years	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
No political commitment	Ministers committed to provide policy and political leadership	NSOs and CRAs engaged in supporting the implementation of the ministers declaration	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
Lack of country ownership and leadership	Ministerial resolution endorsed calling for country ownership and leadership	NSO and CRAs taking the lead from vital statistics perspective	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
Technically neglected	Statisticians, demographers and registrars agreed about past neglect and expressed commitment to do more	Statisticians, demographers and registrars engaged in CRVS activities	ASSD to feed the ministers meeting and provide technical support and leadership	Engage in technical work (use of materials developed at regional and international levels)	
Narrowly conceptualized and lack of clarity on concepts and methodologies	Conceptual and methodological proposals accepted; holistic and harmonized approach advocated	Medium-term CRVS regional plan developed and being implemented in a broader perspective of CRVS	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Use of technical materials, including conceptual and operational tools in delivering outputs in CRVS systems	
No cooperation and integration between national civil registration and vital statistics organs	Statistics Commission for Africa and ASSD expressed commitment to work as per the initiative	Committed to shift its focus area from population census to CRVS	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Increased and sustained cooperation between NSOs, CRAs and ministries of health	
Uncoordinated external support	Ministers requested partners to align their support to the regional initiative	CRVS Core Group established at regional level inclusive of main actors	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Continuous cooperation and collaboration among current core group members and bring onboard others	
Technical leadership expected from UN HQs	Technical leadership provided by regional organizations and ministers committed to support	Regional organizations leading the process	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Continue and sustain the leadership role of regional organizations	

DAR-ES-SALAAM (JUNE 2009) [REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS]	ADDIS ABABA (AUGUST 2010) [CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION]	SOUTH AFRICA (JAN AND SEPT 2012) [7 TH AFRICA SYMPOSIA FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (ASSD) AND 2 ND MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE]		FUTURE ENGAGEMENTS	
		ASSD (JAN 2012)	MCCR (SEPT 2012)	WITHIN THE MEDIUM-TERM FRAMEWORK [UNTIL 2015]	BEYOND 2015
No innovative ideas from the region	New approaches and methods proposed and implementation on progress and ministers committed to support	NSO's, CRAs and health ministry's will be introduced to the new approaches and methods	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Continue implementation of innovative ideas, methodologies and tools	
No regional programme	Ministers endorsed regional medium-term plan	NSOs CRAs and health ministry's will take responsibilities for implementing the medium-term plan	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
No regional policy forum	Ministerial forum established as standing regional platform	ASSD serving as the regional statistical forum for promoting CRVS	Ministers meet for the second time and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
No regional technical forum	Country experts forum established that prepares meeting of ministers	ASSD serving as regional technical forum	Ministers meet for the second time and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
No regional technical and operational guidelines	Acknowledged on the necessity of regional operational guidelines and ministers committed to support	Preparation of regional operational guidelines in progress	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
No assessment on the status of CRVS	Ministers endorsed to conduct comprehensive assessment	Conducting the assessment study on progress	Ministers meet in September to review progress and set future policy directives	Operations, work towards sustainability and reviewing achievements	
PHASE I: RE-ORIENTATION PHASE		PHASE II: PREPARATORY PHASE		PHASE III: OPERATIONS PHASE	

Annex 4 – Themes/focus areas of ASSD and Conference of Ministers and their interface

Year	ASSD/CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS	Proposed Broad Theme/ focus area	Venue (country)
2012	ASSD Conference of Ministers	“Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure in Africa”	South Africa
2013	ASSD	“Standardization of Causes of Death Classifications and Statistics in Africa”	Cote d’Ivoire
2014	ASSD Conference of Ministers	“Promoting Use of Civil Registration Records in Support of Advancing Good Governance in Africa”	
2015	ASSD	“Evaluating the Application of UN Principles and Recommendations on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in the African Region”	
2016	ASSD Conference of Ministers	“Promoting Use of Information Technology (IT) Solutions in Improving CRVS in Africa”	
2018	Conference of Ministers	“Evaluating the Application of UN Principles and Recommendations on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in the African Region”	
2020	Conference of Ministers	“Upgrading Efficiency of Integration between Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems”	

