



Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/CMRCR/2/EXP/11
25 June 2012

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Original : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Second Conference of African Ministers
Responsible for Civil Registration

Durban, Republic of South Africa
3-7 September 2012

Recommendations of the Seventh Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD)



African Union Commission



African Development Bank

A. Background

1. The first conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration held in 2010 in Addis Ababa considered Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) as a regional policy agenda that needed to be treated as a development challenge for the region. The conference culminated in a set of declarations reflecting critical political and policy issues to be addressed in reforming and improving CRVS systems in Africa. Among the recommendations of the conference was the need to prioritize and mainstream CRVS in the regional statistics forums. The conference therefore called on the African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD), an annual statistics forum that previously 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.

2. As per the recommendations of the Ministerial Conference, the sixth ASSD that was held in Cairo, Egypt from 31 October to 2 November 2010 adopted a resolution that shifted its focus area from the Population and Housing Census to CRVS systems for the next five symposia beginning in 2012. Accordingly, the seventh ASSD was the first in a series of the five symposia to be convened focusing on CRVS. The symposium was held from 18 to 23 January 2012, at the Lagoon Beach Hotel in Cape Town, South Africa, back to back with the third meeting of the Statistics Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa III) under the theme *“Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure”*.

B. Attendance

3. The Symposium was convened by Statistics South Africa as host and secretariat of ASSD, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC). The meeting convened over 100 participants including Directors of National statistics offices (NSOs), civil registration authorities, country experts in charge of CRVS, representatives of regional, subregional and international organizations, statistical training centres and a group of young African statisticians.

C. Account of Proceedings

4. Welcoming remarks were made by the Executive Secretary of UNECA, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh. Official statements were delivered by the President of the African Development Bank Mr. Donald Kaberuka and the Commissioner for the Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba. The Minister of the Department of Home Affairs of South Africa, Honourable Dr. Dlamini Zuma, gave the opening statement. The meeting was officially opened by the Minister in the Presidency in charge of the National Planning Commission of South Africa, Honourable Trevor Andrew Manuel.

5. The opening session was followed by an award ceremony conducted by the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) on behalf of the African statistical community recognizing the efforts and contribution of senior statisticians in the advancement of statistical work in Africa.

6. The Symposium’s deliberations mainly focused on three thematic topics, namely: the CRVS legal framework; organization, management and operations of CRVS and the institutional and human infrastructure of CRVS. Presentations were made in the following areas, followed by discussions :

- Ongoing and future programmes of CRVS from the global and regional perspectives including the Africa Programme on Accelerated improvement of CRVS (APAI-CRVS)

- Preliminary results of the regional CRVS baseline assessment study
- Systematic , institutional and infrastructural challenges in CRVS
- Introduction to United Nations documents on CRVS and the regional resource documents on CRVS
- Inter-linkages and operations of civil registration and human rights, health service delivery and national identification
- Cause of death statistics
- A report on ASSD achievements since its inception
- A report on the observations and recommendations by a group of young African statisticians on the South African census 2011 enumeration process
- Role of ASSD in:
 - Monitoring the implementation of the regional medium-term CRVS plan
 - Strengthening institutional interface between civil registration and vital statistics organs
 - Addressing CRVS institutional and human infrastructure challenges
 - Strengthening vital statistics structures in NSOs and other sector offices

D. Recommendations

7. The meeting proposed several recommendations towards the advancement of the regional CRVS agenda as presented below;

8. We, the representatives of National Statistical Offices and the Civil Registration Authorities of African States, supported by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the government of South Africa, PARIS21, DRS and other development partners, gathered in Cape Town from 18 to 20 January 2012 during the seventh Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD,) under the theme “*Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure*”;

9. Appreciating the hospitality of the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa in hosting the seventh ASSD in Cape Town;

10. Acknowledging the positive contribution of the previous six sessions of the ASSD towards the progress made by African countries in conducting the 2010 round of Population and Housing Censuses (2010 RPHC), but noting the continuing challenges being faced by countries in conducting censuses and disseminating related statistical products;

11. Re-emphasizing our support to countries emerging from conflicts to ensure that they conduct their censuses during the 2010 RPHC;

12. Further acknowledging the contributions of young statisticians in the development of statistics in Africa;

13. Accepting that civil registration services are fundamental to good governance and basic service delivery;

14. Noting the commitment of the African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration to give priority to mobilizing Africa to improve Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems;

15. Supporting the decision of the second Session of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa II) to endorse the recommendations of the 2009 regional workshop held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, calling for the strengthening of CRVS systems in Africa;
16. Recalling the resolution of the sixth ASSD held in Cairo Egypt that adopted the strengthening National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems as the thematic focus of ASSD for the next five years beginning in 2012;
17. Being aware of the challenges that National Statistical Offices, Civil Registration Authorities continue to face in the development of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems;
18. Noting the challenges of most National Statistics Offices in providing reliable, timely and continuous data on demographic and health variables and in the preparation of population estimates and projections that can be used with full confidence in monitoring national development efforts, including the Millennium Development Goals;
19. Further noting the challenges faced by countries in evaluating the completeness and quality of population census counts, updating sampling frames and providing accurate denominators for calculating various economic and social indicators;
20. Taking note of the lack of current, continuous and disaggregated demographic, health and other social statistics data to lower administrative units, specifically in those countries with a decentralized public administration and/or federal systems;
21. Further noting the lack of suitable records and evidence of vital events to identify the civil status of individuals in the majority of African countries, which is a deterring factor in the application and monitoring of the implementation of international and regional human rights instruments and provisions, especially on children, women and vulnerable population groups, including refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons;
22. Noting with concern that the preliminary findings of the regional assessment study show huge disparities among countries in the performances of CRVS systems in Africa, with almost all countries not publishing vital statistics due to the incomplete nature of civil registration systems, and only two of the 32 reporting countries having reached complete civil registration;

1. Hereby recommend that:

- 1.1. Governments ensure that births and deaths occurring within their territory are registered regardless of nationality or legal status and that the certificates are issued;
- 1.2. Countries to draft and review their laws relating to civil registration and vital statistics to align them to the principles and recommendations of the United Nations, and the regional operational guidelines on the subject that will be developed in accordance with the Medium term CRVS Plan
- 1.3. Governments improve the availability and accessibility of civil registration services by devolving civil registration structures and service points down to the lowest administrative unit and as near as possible to families and communities in all parts of the country, including rural and remote areas, as

civil registration services are entitlements to each and every person irrespective of his/her citizenship in a country;

- 1.4. Civil registration services be integrated into public services, including the court administration, health, education, national identification services etc. so as to facilitate civil registration operations and to help individuals and families to use civil registration records and evidences in protecting their rights and access various legal, administrative and social services;
- 1.5. Health institutions and outreach services need play an important role in capturing birth and death events including causes of death;
- 1.6. Public offices at all levels, including courts, health and education services, national identification and passport issuing institutions, election administrations, border police and security, etc. align their procedures and evidence and information requirements to accept and give priority to civil registration records and certificates
- 1.7. Countries that have not yet initiated processing and compiling vital statistics from civil registration need to generate the statistics, despite the level of completeness and continue their efforts in improving the quality and completeness;
- 1.8. Countries to ensure the allocation of adequate budget to day to day CRVS operations and mobilize and coordinate resources from development partners.

2. We hereby support and commit to be actively engaged in:

- 2.1. The implementation of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) and the related regional Medium-term Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Plan;
- 2.2. The organization of the second ministerial Conference in South Africa in September 2012 and provision of the necessary technical and logistical services to our ministers;
- 2.3. Supporting the regional CRVS Secretariat established at the ECA in its effort and promoting the regional policies and programmes on CRVS.

3. We hereby commit:

- 3.1. To develop monitoring and evaluation systems for our censuses to enable all implementers and other actors to monitor progress and address challenges;
- 3.2. 18.2 To submit the completed questionnaire of the CRVS Assessment Study within one month if not already done;
- 3.3. To prepare comprehensive national civil registration and vital statistics plans, taking into account the international recommendations and the recent regional initiatives on improving CRVS systems in Africa;

- 3.4. To further strengthen and facilitate coordination between National Statistics Offices and Civil Registration Authorities in managing and monitoring the challenges of their CRVS systems.

4. We hereby urge:

- 4.1. The ASSD Secretariat to finalize the study on the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses and share lessons learnt, challenges, threats and risks with countries;
- 4.2. The ASSD secretariat to establish a standing Resolutions Committee to manage the ASSD resolutions;
- 4.3. UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, HMN/WHO and other partners to continue their support to the implementation of the APAI-CRVS at regional and national levels;
- 4.4. UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, HMN/WHO and other partners to continue their support to the planning and organization of the second ministerial conference on CRVS and the series of ASSD on CRVS;
- 4.5. HMN/WHO to support the APAI-CRVS by mobilizing resources through the Commission on Information and Accountability, in such areas as supporting the Young Statisticians Agenda on CRVS, providing technical leadership for the planning and organization of the eighth ASSD that will focus on causes of death recording and compilation of related statistics, and availing MOVE IT practical lessons to countries;
- 4.6. Subregional organizations and RECs to actively participate in the promotion and implementation of the APAI-CRVS.
- 4.7. The United Nations Statistics Division to scale up its efforts of improving and revising the international instruments on CRVS systems and to continue to provide technical support to the ongoing regional initiative.
- 4.8. Young statisticians and the statistics community in general to acquaint themselves to the broad-based regional initiative of improving CRVS systems in Africa that urges a multidisciplinary orientation and knowledge to effectively provide their services and contribute their part.
- 4.9. National Statistical Offices to create platforms for the Young African Statisticians to participate in statistical programmes;
- 4.10. Research institutions in legal, public health and administration fields contribute in building the capacities of countries in the operation and management of CRVS systems;
- 4.11. National Statistics Offices and Statistical Training Centres build their statistical capacities in generating and managing vital statistics from civil registration;
- 4.12. Regional organizations and partners to reinforce the capacity of countries in civil registration management, operations, compilation, analysis and

dissemination of reliable vital statistics through workshops, training and provisions of guidelines;

- 4.13. AfDB, ECA, AUC and partners to further strengthen the regional CRVS Core Group and endeavour to include partners that have not yet part of this group to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resource;
- 4.14. AUC to take steps to institutionalize the ministerial conference as a standing regional platform as per the resolution of the first ministerial conference;
- 4.15. ECA to institutionalize the activities of CRVS systems in the African Centre for Statistics as per the recommendations of the first ministerial conference;
- 4.16. Countries, the Core Group and other partners to give due consideration to the findings and recommendations of the technical working groups that met during this symposium.

E. Closing of the Meeting

23. The meeting was closed by the ASSD Chairman and Statistician General of South Africa, Mr. Pali J. Lehohla, who handed over to the next host country (Cote d'Ivoire).