

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION

United Nations Conference Centre
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

13-14 August 2010

SECOND CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION

Durban International Convention Centre
Durban, South Africa

6-7 September 2012



DECLARATION THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION:

Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa

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, the 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, programs, 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 programs, including strengthening the coordination of activities among various departments and ministries at national, subregional, 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;
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 Center 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 programs, 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.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, August 14, 2010

DECLARATION OF THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION:

Preamble

We, the African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration:

1. Held our Second Conference on 6 and 7 September 2012 in Durban, South Africa, on the theme, Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Institutional and Human Infrastructure. The conference was jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of the Republic of South Africa, supported by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Health Organisation (WHO) and Health Metrics Network (HMN);
2. Take this opportunity to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Ethiopia for the death of His Excellency, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, whose commitment and passion for Africa's development has contributed to placing CRVS on the development agenda of African countries. We also express our condolences to the Government and people of Ghana for the death of His Excellency, Professor John Evans Atta Mills, President of the Republic of Ghana, for his contribution to the development of Africa. We further express our condolences to the Government and people of Malawi for the death of His Excellency, Bingu wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi.
3. Welcome the Republic of South Sudan as a new member of the Conference;
4. Recall the commitments made at our first conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in August 2010 to consider and prioritize civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) as a regional policy agenda, and take steps to reform and improve CRVS systems in our countries. In this regard, we acknowledge that the theme of our second conference is both timely and relevant for achieving viable, sustainable and efficient CRVS systems in Africa;
5. Note with satisfaction the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (Ref; Assembly/AU/DEC.424) endorsing the recommendation of our first conference on the institutionalisation of the Conference as a standing regional forum of the African Union to deal with matters concerning civil registration;
6. Commend the progress and achievements made by Member States, since the first conference in August 2010, in improving civil registration and vital statistics systems, including the contribution of African regional organizations, various UN organizations and other development partners;
7. Commend the CRVS Secretariat at UNECA on its current efforts in coordinating international and regional interventions by creating regional platforms such as the CRVS regional Core Group and stakeholders forum;
8. Commend and welcome the contribution of the Young African Statisticians (YAS) in the development of CRVS in Africa, including their participation in this Conference;
9. Welcome the participation and contribution of non-governmental organizations, including the role

of the private sector in the future development of CRVS systems in Africa;

10. Recognize that civil registration is a regular government operation with far reaching implications for national security, policy, governance, planning, development monitoring and evaluation;
11. Are aware of the challenges that our countries continue to face in the development of CRVS systems, especially the scandal of invisibility, as highlighted in the report of the comprehensive regional assessment undertaken by the Secretariat and reiterated by His Excellency Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa;
12. Recognize the continuing importance of CRVS in advancing Africa's development agenda, including accelerating regional integration, attaining the priorities of NEPAD, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
13. Take note of the recommendations by the Experts Group Meeting, preceding this conference, to address the challenges of developing CRVS systems in Africa.
14. Note that the challenge before us now is to reaffirm our commitment and scale up efforts to reform and improve CRVS systems in our countries. In this regard, we fully endorse the recommendations of our experts on strategies for improving CRVS as well as the proposed Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) for improvement of CRVS at national and regional level. In light of the recommendations.
15. We hereby resolve to:
 - a. Continue our efforts to develop appropriate policies and strategies to reform and improve our CRVS systems, and to mainstream them in national development plans and programmes, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of our countries. In this regard, we commit to urgently develop costed national plans of action on CRVS that reflect individual country priorities based on comprehensive assessments to be undertaken with the support of the Secretariat and partner organizations;
 - b. Formulate laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory registration of all vital events occurring within our countries, with guarantees of equal access to the system for all persons, regardless of nationality or legal status. In this regard, we commit to continue our efforts in revising and updating civil registration and statistical legislation in our respective countries in line with regional and international guidelines and taking into account the evolving needs and innovations;
 - c. Adopt appropriate technologies to speed and scale up civil registration, manage civil registration records, and ensure their integrity and security against natural disasters, civil wars, etc.;
 - d. Accord high priority to CRVS and ensure allocation of adequate human and financial resources for the day-to-day operations of CRVS in our countries, including implementation of the national action plans in order to ensure sustainability and country ownership;
 - e. Call upon our development partners to continue to support our efforts in capacity building and resource mobilization and align their support to the national CRVS plans, consistent with the Paris, Accra and Busan Declarations on Aid and Development Effectiveness; Invite the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for

Women's and Children's Health to participate in the APAI-CRVS

- f. Establish high-level coordination mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders for efficient functioning of CRVS systems, taking into account the multi-sectoral and integrated nature of civil registration services;
- g. Ensure the alignment of health information management system and the CRVS systems and that both be mainstreamed into National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS);
- h. Further strengthen and facilitate coordination between National Statistical Offices and Civil Registration Authorities in managing and monitoring the challenges of CRVS systems;
- i. Develop results-based monitoring and evaluation systems and tools to monitor and report on progress on CRVS;
- j. Continue to take steps to improve the availability and accessibility of civil registration services by devolving services to local levels through existing structures and service networks, in particular the health sector;
- k. Intensify awareness-raising campaigns to educate the public on the importance and procedures of CRVS to ensure their effective functioning;

Way forward

We urge

Member States to undertake in-depth assessment of the state of their national civil registration systems and develop a strategic and action plans for improving CRVS;

- 16. The Secretariat and other partner organizations to continue to provide technical support to reinforce the capacity of member States in CRVS operations and management through technical advisory services, workshops, training and provision of guidelines. In this regard, we request the Secretariat to establish a regional knowledge hub on CRVS that promotes research to build technical capacity at the national, regional and continental levels. We also request the Secretariat to undertake operational research in the area of death registration and certification of cause of death in Africa;
- 17. Member States and development partners to reinforce the CRVS Secretariat at UNECA with adequate resources and appropriate staff complement to enable it carry out its mandate as recommended by the first Ministerial conference;
- 18. Invite African Ministers of Health to join us in view of the important role of the health sector in the delivery of civil registration services to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach in addressing the challenges of improving CRVS systems in Africa;
- 19. Relevant national universities, regional research and training institutions to respond to the knowledge demand in improving death registration and causes of death certification in countries with the support from development partners;

20. The African Union to allocate the necessary financial and technical resources in support of the CRVS development agenda;

We reaffirm:

21. Our commitment to make the conference a dynamic forum that is used to discuss policy and strategic issues related to improving CRVS systems in Africa; In this regard, we undertake to support the AUC in its implementation processes;

Vote of thanks

We thank His Excellency, President Jacob Zuma and the Government and people of the Republic of South Africa for hosting this Conference and for the excellent arrangements and hospitality accorded to all delegations.

We also thank the Premier of KwaZulu Natal Province and Mayor of the City of Durban for their warm hospitality.

We express our deepest appreciation to His Excellency President Jacob Zuma, for gracing the conference with his presence and his inspiring opening speech.

We also express our sincere appreciation to the Honourable Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister of Home Affairs of South Africa and incoming Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the able manner in which she chaired the Conference.

We congratulate the Minister over her recent election as the Chairperson of the AUC and look forward to working with her to move the CRVS agenda forward in her new capacity.

We thank His Excellency Mr. Birhan Hailu, Minister of Justice of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the Bureau of our Conference as well as all the other members of the Bureau for their leadership over the past two years;

We also thank UNECA, AUC, AfDB, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO and HMN and other partners for their presentations and the support provided in organizing the conference.

We look forward to our next Conference to be hosted by the Government of Cote d'Ivoire in September 2014.

Durban, South Africa 7 September, 2012