

***Report of the Preparatory Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting  
of the First Conference of African Ministers  
Responsible for Civil Registration***

***And***

***Report of the First Conference of African Ministers  
Responsible for Civil Registration***

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
10-14 August 2010

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ACGSD	African Centre for Gender and Social Development
ACS	African Centre for Statistics/ECA
AEGM	Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting
AfDB	African Development Bank
AGDI	African Gender and Development Index
ASSD	Africa Symposium on Statistical Development
AUC	African Union Commission
CR	Civil Registration
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
HMN	Health Metrics Network
ICLAD	International Consortium for Law and Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NSDS	National Strategy for the Development of Statistics
NSO	National Statistics Office
NSS	National Statistical System
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SHaSA	Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
WHO	World Health Organization

## **Report of the Preparatory Ad Hoc Experts' Group Meeting for the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration**

### **A. Introduction**

1. An Ad Hoc Experts' Group Meeting (AEGM) was convened 10-12 August 2010 at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to prepare for the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, that was held in the same venue 13-14 August 2010. Both the Conference and the preparatory AEGM were organized jointly by the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of Ethiopia.

### **B. Attendance**

2. The meeting was attended by participants from national civil registration (CR) offices and National Statistics Offices (NSOs) of most African countries, the ECA, AfDB, AUC, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Health Metrics Network (HMN), World Health Organization, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other development partners based in Ethiopia. Among the participants were a number of Heads of NSOs and the Assistant Minister of Interior and Civil Affairs of Egypt.

3. The meeting received and considered background documents prepared by the organizers and technical partners and proposed several recommendations for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems (CRVS) in Africa. See Annex 1 for the Programme of Work.

### **C. Opening Session**

4. Opening statements were made by and on behalf of Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of UNECA; Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the AUC; Dr. Charles Lufumpa, Director of the Statistics Department of AfDB; and His Excellency Mr. Berhan Hailu, Minister of Justice of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

5. In the welcoming remarks read on his behalf by Dr. Dimitri Sanga, Officer-in-Charge of the African Centre for Statistics (ACS), Mr. Janneh underlined the importance of CR in providing critical demographic and health statistics and enabling countries to measure and monitor development outcomes as well as in supporting research endeavours. He noted that in spite of its importance, many countries in Africa lack adequate and well-functioning systems. This situation has a detrimental impact on their ability to generate relevant, accurate and timely vital statistics for measuring development results, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

6. He recalled that the workshop on CRVS held in Tanzania in June 2009, found, among other things, that a critical factor impeding the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa was the limited political commitment and leadership of African Governments towards revamping the systems. This finding led to the recommendation to organize a high-level Ministerial Conference, for which the AEGM was being convened. He called on the experts to look into technical, operational and policy issues that could support CRVS system reforms and improvement in the region.

7. In his statement to the meeting, Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, who was represented by Mr. Yeo Dossina, Head of the Statistical Unit at the AUC observed that Africa could not assess the progress on regional integration without coherent and functioning CRVS systems. He noted that several legal instruments and protocols of the AU called for the promotion and strengthening of

CRVS systems, notably the African Charter on Human Rights; the Convention on the Rights of Children; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, as well as the African Charter on Statistics, developed to facilitate the coordination of statistical activities in Africa, and to serve as a professional code of ethics for the profession of the African statistician. In his statement, Mr. Mkwezalamba also pointed to the Strategy on the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA), which had been recently endorsed by the AU Summit of Heads of State and the Government to facilitate implementation of the Charter. He urged all CRVS experts to contribute further to the development of SHaSA for submission to the next Conference of Ministers of Finance and the AU Summit of Heads of State and Government in July 2011.

8. Mr. Kokil Beejaye, Divisional Manager at AfDB, who delivered an opening statement on behalf of Dr. Charles Lufumpa, Director of the Statistics Department at AfDB observed that the development of health management information systems was affected by the absence or inadequate birth and death registration systems. He also noted that decentralization programmes and democratization processes currently being implemented in a number of African countries were being challenged by the absence of conventional and relevant data on population dynamics from vital statistics systems. He further noted that beyond the obvious benefits of evaluating development outcomes, CRVS systems are also at the prime sources of population dynamics, useful for planning social and economic programmes in such areas as education, health, housing, urban development and public utilities.

9. Referring to the Regional Workshop on CRVS held in Tanzania in June 2009, he reiterated the commitment of the AfDB to continue to provide the necessary financial and technical support for improving CRVS systems in African countries, including supporting efforts to improve MDG monitoring on the continent.

10. In his opening statement, His Excellency Mr. Berhan Hailu observed that one of the roles of National Statistical Systems (NSS) is to produce statistics to build sound, reliable information systems to support decision making from the highest level of government to the individual citizen. He noted that in Ethiopia, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), covering the periods 2009-2010 and 2013-2014, articulates a coherent strategy for strengthening the entire NSS, with one of the major strategic themes being the establishment of a sound and conventional CRVS system. He further noted that Ethiopia had successfully developed and tabled in parliament a new CRVS law, addressing issues of human rights, good governance and monitoring development programmes for review and adoption.

#### **D. Objectives of the Meeting**

11. The AEGM was convened to provide a forum for a multi-stakeholder participation in the preparation for the first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration. The objectives of the AEGM were therefore derived from those of the Conference of Ministers, which were:

- To mobilize and rally political commitment and leadership of national governments, civil registration authorities and National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa;
- To address the need for enhanced regional commitment and partnership in the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa.

12. The expected Outcomes of the conference were:

- Adoption of a medium-term plan and strategies for reforming and improving civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa;
- Creation of a high-level regional platform that will engage national governments, sub regional and regional organizations in a continuous and sustainable dialogue, mutual support and partnership in promoting good practices between and among national governments; and
- Enhanced awareness and commitments of national governments in operating and maintaining CRVS systems.

13. The organizing partners had commissioned reports and documents with proposals for reforming and improving CRVS systems. The AEGM was expected to review these proposals and recommendations and presented them at the Ministers meeting for endorsement.

#### **E. Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa**

14. This session addressed the need for improving CRVS systems in Africa through several presentations. The first two presentations were made by representatives from the United Nations Statistics Division on the importance of CRVS systems and also on the existent international standards and guidelines on CRVS.

##### ***Presentations and discussions***

15. The first presentation elaborated on the characteristics of a functioning CR system which was defined as the continuous, permanent and compulsory recording of the occurrence and characteristics of all vital events occurring to each member of the population in accordance with the legal requirements of each country. Vital events were defined to include births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and such other events as adoption, recognition, legitimation, separation and annulment depending on national legislations. The presentation was concluded with a description of the inter-relationship between civil registration, vital statistics, human rights and good governance. Some of the main points of discussion were as summarized below:

- Civil registration was defined as a state-run institutional responsibility for gathering, screening, documenting, filing, safekeeping, correcting, updating and certifying records of specified vital events, thus providing an official and permanent record regarding the occurrence of the events.
- The main importance of civil registration is to produce legal documents necessary for establishing identity of persons and their relationship to the State. It is also a perfect source of vital statistics, which are in turn, an irreplaceable part of the NSS.
- Civil registration is directly related to the assurance and protection of basic international human rights. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that every child should have a name and nationality and should be registered. Acknowledgment and safeguarding of several other international rights depend on the existence of a functioning CR system.

16. The second presentation titled “International Standards and Guidelines – Improving CRVS Systems in Africa” detailed the components of the CRVS, taking into consideration the findings of a research done in countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It elaborated on the framework for improving CRVS systems developed by the UNSD under the International Programme for Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, inaugurated in 1990.

This framework consists of international recommendations for vital statistics, five manuals on different aspects of CR and its functioning and a training manual.

17. The presentation continued with descriptions of the following features of CRVS: the legal framework, organizational structure and coordination mechanisms of civil registration, the need for public awareness quality control and assessment and core statistical topics. The presentation outlined the most critical components and international guidelines designed to enhance their performance. It concluded with an overview of factors that need to be taken into account when developing or improving these systems.

18. During the ensuing discussions, the following issues were raised:

- Legal frameworks for civil registration should avoid over regulation and provide the managers of the systems with flexibility to innovate and respond to specific problems.
- Credibility of CRVS data was a problem because some of the contents are politically sensitive.
- Proper civil registration does not necessarily imply sound vital statistics. Necessary strategies must be established to derive vital statistics from the CR system.
- Human and financial resources are key to African countries in developing CRVS.
- Cultural issues sometimes prevent local people from registering deaths and marriages and incentives should be provided to encourage them to register.
- Guidelines to be prepared should include the use of Information and Communication Technology for CRVS.
- Enacting stand-alone laws on CRVS is not enough. There is a need to deal with the entire legislative framework, including decrees, rulings, regulations, etc.
- To be effective the civil registration system need efficient trained teams at local levels.
- Proper archives management systems are crucial for CRVS maintenance.
- Different aspects of civil registration fall under the mandates of various agencies; there is therefore a need to set up coordination committees on CRVS.
- Public awareness must be raised to gain the effective participation of all groups. Such information, education and communication campaigns could adopt the model of communication used by Governments for awareness campaign on censuses. They could also link CR with census-awareness campaigns.
- Harmonization of vital statistics at local, national and regional levels could benefit from the ongoing SHaSA framework. Experts should explore the possibility of recommending the enshrinement of CR in national constitutions, as is the case of censuses in some countries. This could be an effective way of ensuring that CR is taken seriously at policy and other levels.

19. The presentation on challenges and opportunities for the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa noted with concern that the registration systems in a majority of African countries were inadequate and incomplete, with serious implications for effective public administration, service delivery and economic and social development. It noted that only a handful of African countries could claim to have well-functioning systems. Several reasons were adduced for this situation, including the lack of adequate legal framework, lack of coordination between CR and official statistics, low statistical capacity and a lack of awareness of the need to develop both systems simultaneously. The meeting, therefore, emphasized the need for urgent remedial action to be taken to make CRVS meet the development needs of African countries and comply with international standards.

20. In the next presentation, HMN emphasized that the health sector is one of the stakeholders of the civil registration system, stressing that no effective intervention can be undertaken in the absence of comprehensive data on births and deaths. There is therefore an urgent need to improve the quality and quantity of vital statistics.

21. Gender perspectives of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa was discussed by the African Centre for Gender and Social Development of UNECA, which observed that the registration of male deaths was more complete than that of females, and urged countries to take into consideration gender issues when reviewing their laws, such as the recognition of customary marriages enforced by law. Participants took note of the work on the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI). In that regard, they enquired why all countries on the continent were not involved in implementing the index and the criteria used in selecting those involved. They were informed of potential difficulties in attempting to cover all 53 African countries at the same time. In terms of the selection criteria, the 17 countries currently participating in the second phase of the project were included on a voluntary basis. The pilot phase in the implementation of AGDI involved 12 countries.

22. UNICEF, in the next presentation, emphasized the need to accelerate the implementation of universal birth registration in Africa, noting that it is a public good and the right of every child, without which a child could be denied access to social services, health, education and inheritance. It was observed that birth registration provides a tool for protection against child trafficking, early marriages and child labour. Furthermore, birth registration coverage is strongly linked to political will than to the wealth of countries, as some low income countries (based on GDP per capita) have more extensive coverage than middle income ones. There is also a higher rate of registration in urban areas than in rural areas, especially among the richest 20 per cent of the any country's population.

23. UNHCR focused its presentation on the specific situation of forcibly displaced persons in Africa and their specific protection, risks and vulnerability associated to the absence of civil registration. Displaced persons frequently lack civil registration documents since they may have lost them during their displacement or are unable to obtain them due to their specific circumstances. For instance, encampment policies in many parts of Africa may impinge upon freedom of movement and may render civil registration services physically inaccessible, preventing refugees from accessing basic services. In the absence of civil registration documents displaced persons may also risk deportation or detention and girls may be exposed to exploitation and early marriage when they are unable to prove their age.

24. Children born while their parents are displaced do not always receive birth certificates due to the remoteness of the usual locations of refugee camps and absence of registration services there. UNHCR noted that although birth registration does not normally confer nationality, it constitutes a key form of proof of the link between an individual and a State and thereby serves to prevent statelessness. UNHCR therefore called for children of refugees and internally displaced persons to be issued with birth certificates as an important tool for protection against common abuses suffered by displaced children, such as child labour, sexual exploitation, recruitment by armed forces/groups or becoming victims of human trafficking.

25. The next presentation by an expert from Boston University on international experience on law drafting techniques and applications to civil registration laws emphasized three main points. First, to ensure that law on CRVS meet international guidelines, such as those set forth in the *United Nations Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework*, those involved in drafting or reforming the law need detailed evidence about the specific patterns of behaviour that occur within their national and local jurisdictions. Simply

copying law from other jurisdictions or using vague drafting language would result in laws that cannot be adequately implemented because it does not recognize country-specific obstacles to meeting international standards.

26. Second, evidence-based legislative drafting techniques can be used to draft comprehensive organic law, subsidiary rules/administrative regulations, and even operational manuals to guide CRVS systems. Evidence-based legislative drafting steps include identifying the problem and the specific behaviours that contribute to it, explaining the causes of the problematic behaviour, designing legal solutions that address the problematic behaviours, and gathering evidence at each step to monitor and evaluate progress.

27. Third, it is of vital importance that policymakers, experts, and legislation drafters work together to create a legal framework that can improve civil status information and generation of vital statistics. Drafters rely on experts for information that shapes the content of the law, and experts and policymakers rely on drafters for legal expertise, which often affects the procedural and substantive issues that the technical language of law could determine.

### ***Recommendations***

28. The presentations were discussed and the following recommendations were made:

- Improvements are needed in almost all the areas of concern, namely: the formulation and enforcement of appropriate civil registration laws; the establishment of efficient civil registration service; compliance with international standards in terms of topics, coverage and procedures; improvement of statistical capacities to compile and process data, and routine dissemination of vital statistics.
- National governments need to commit themselves toward improving civil registration as well as vital statistics as both have crucial impact on the lives of individuals, society-at-large, and development planning and decision-making. Without such commitment and subsequent concrete action, the improvement of CRVS systems is not likely to occur. Specifically:
  - Countries should take full advantage of on-going sectoral reform programmes, and democratization and decentralization processes in Africa to bring civil registration services to the people.
  - Countries should revise and update their civil registration laws and statistical legislation in line with current international best practices and take measures that ensure proper implementation.
- The issue of fees for civil registration should be reviewed and governments should consider making civil registration free of charge. UNECA and UNICEF are urged to study the possibility of systematic exemption of vital registration fees.
- Countries are encouraged to use UN guidelines and recommendations as a basis for their CRVS improvement programme.
- Universities and regional training institutions are called upon to develop appropriate curricula for building capacity and improving CRVS in Africa.
- To achieve the goal of universal coverage, countries should adopt laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory birth registration for all children, including refugees and IDP children, within their national territory, with guarantee for equal access to birth registration for all persons, regardless of nationality, immigration or marital status. However, there is need for further discussions on the inherent implications on nationality and citizenship of birth registration and issuance of birth



certificates to non-nationals, including refugees.

- Registration offices need to be as close as possible to the target groups. Governments need therefore to establish central and sub-national registration offices, including in rural areas and in refugee/IDP areas.
- Countries should consider enshrining civil registration into their national constitutions, given its importance to public policy, good governance, human rights, rights of children, and as a basis for reliable vital statistics which are a sound basis for all stages of evidence-based decision-making and monitoring and evaluation of sub-national, national, subregional, regional and international development.
- Countries should develop comprehensive legal frameworks for civil registration systems, with associated strategies to derive vital statistics from the registers.
- Countries should ensure that laws on CRVS meet international guidelines. In this regard, evidence based drafting techniques should be used to draft comprehensive organic law, subsidiary rules/administrative regulations, and operational manuals; this ensures that the laws are based on detailed evidence about the specific patterns of behaviour that occur within national and local jurisdictions. Policymakers, experts, and legislation drafters should work together to create a legal framework that will improve civil status information and generation of vital statistics.
- Any implementation guideline should include provisions for the use of information and communication technologies for the operation of CRVS systems, as well as arrangements for archiving and managing relevant CRVS data and information.
- Population participation is a key element for effective CRVS; therefore specific emphasis must be placed on raising public awareness on the importance and procedures of civil registration, in particular through community outreach programmes that take into consideration potential barriers to registration. Such campaigns should also target the rural population, as well as government officials to increase their knowledge on CRVS.
- Arrangements should also be made to provide adequate for registration agents.
- UNECA and AfDB are requested to include civil registration in the curricular of statistical training centres through AGROST.
- Any proposed programme of action for reforming CRVS systems must address the unique conditions specific to Africa, among them, the fact that most of these events occur outside health facilities, i.e., in villages and homes without modern facilities.
- The AUC should play a strong advocacy role to ensure a strong mandate for accelerated universal CR and advocacy to increase awareness among senior officials. Countries and international organizations are urged to push for universal CR, with a focus on reaching MDG goals in 2015.
- Countries are urged to make provisions for flexible and easily accessible late registration procedures UNECA and UNICEF are urged to document best practices in minimizing late registration.

## **F. Regional Initiatives and Strategies**

29. The session featured three presentations, two from UNECA, and one from AfDB. The first presentation was on the outcomes and progress of the implementation of the recommendations of the Tanzania Regional Workshop. The focus was on the improvements of the components of CRVS systems in Africa. These were outlined to include:

- Advocacy efforts were successfully progressing;
- Regional collaboration and integration in the domain of CRVS was noted to be progressing as planned;

- There were promising results in regional and international partnership building in CRVS;
- Efforts were needed in the domain of monitoring progress at the country level; and
- Visible efforts were required from regional training institutions.

30. The second presentation was on the proposed medium-term regional plan for CRVS. It focused on addressing the key points of the plan, namely: the overall goal, the general and specific objectives, the strategies, the institutional framework, the planned activities, resource requirements, the risks and assumptions. It was observed that the budget of the current three-year programme was about \$ 2.7 million, with 38.3 per cent being allocated to capacity-building as proposed in the medium-term plan. The presentation noted that:

- Governments, CR authorities and NSOs would implement the plan;
- UNECA, AUC and AfDB would support the implementation of the plan;
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and subregional organizations should also collaborate; and
- Regional statistical training centres and academic institutions would be involved in capacity-building.

31. The presentation by AfDB was on partnership building and resource requirements and mobilization. The focus was on the modalities and instruments for partnership and collaboration; resource requirements at national level; and resource mobilization strategies.

32. The presentation noted that at national, regional and international level, there is a need for harmonization of CRVS plans and programmes of various partners working in Africa. Possible approaches include integrated intervention frameworks; avoidance of parallel systems and concomitant duplication; and the creation of a joint fund basket at the regional level.

## **G. Technical, operational and policy issues**

### ***Presentations and discussions***

33. A presentation by UNECA outlined the issues to be addressed in improving CRVS systems in Africa. The presentation emphasized the approaches, results, areas of reform and improvements. Identified areas of reform and improvements include technical, legal, organizational, and operational areas as well as advocacy. Breakaway sessions were held in two parallel groups for more focused technical, operational and policy discussions. The groups were formed along language lines: English and French speaking.

34. From the discussions, the following issues were raised:

- It is important to include support for agencies responsible for CRVS during resource allocation in National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). It was underlined that in principle NSDS include tools for the NSS, which are not limited to only the statistical offices, but rather includes all producers of official statistics. Therefore, it is up to each country to consider and provide for the collaborative involvement and engagement of different national agencies when drafting their NSDS. It is equally important for international partners, such as the PARIS21 secretariat to give more attention to this matter when supporting countries in the establishment of their NSDS.

- The CRVS system is an information production system. In that sense, it is costly and requires heavy investments, particularly in matters relating to ICT. Computerization and archiving systems are crucial for a strong CRVS organization, as well as protection against documentary fraud, such as falsification of certificates. However, many countries are weak in this area and therefore need assistance with the digitizing of data collected on hard copy media, and the archiving of data.
- Civil society and non-governmental organizations (CSOs and NGOs) should be mobilized for stronger advocacy and communication activities.
- Regional guidelines reflecting the African context should be developed based on available international manuals.
- Strategies and plans for reforming, improving or implementing CRVS systems should include provision for capacity-building to ensure proper human resources at national and local levels. Capacity-building should include curriculum development for in-services for existing professionals as well as pre-service training for new professionals. The statistical training centres should be supported to shift the focus of their training from the ad hoc systems (DHS and MICS) which marginalized the field CRVS.
- UNECA should request the establishment of a full time post for a CRVS expert to be able to carry forward such a loaded agenda.
- South-South Cooperation (study tours) should be conducted between countries to share best practices.
- The importance of coordination of interventions at national, regional and international levels was emphasized.
- Professionals responsible for CRVS systems should have clear job descriptions which include the skills and qualifications required to carry out their responsibilities.
- Consideration should be given for the provision of free birth certificates because of the prevailing poor conditions among many people in Africa.

35. Concerning the proposed medium-term plan, the following remarks were made:

- It appears that too many activities are planned for a short period of two-and-half years; a period of five years would be more realistic, taking into account the fact that CRVS systems have been underdeveloped for almost 40 years in most of African countries.
- The proposed approach is too sectoral; it should be global in order to include related concerns such as the protection of children, gender issues and peace keeping activities, including the updating of electoral registers based on CR.
- It is not possible to measure CRVS achievements in a quantitative way if the actual coverage rates are unknown or not accurate; there is therefore need to undertake a complete assessment study to establish a baseline for measuring achievements.
- There is a need to refine the objectives of the Regional Mid-Term Plan (2009-2012). For example, the first and second specific objectives should make a clear distinction between coverage and completeness of the CR systems whose status is reflected as a single percentage.
- The plan should be dynamic so that it can respond and adapt to lessons learned during implementation.
- The plan should ensure that CRVS systems are government priorities and should not assume that this is the case as is currently reflected in the document.
- The implementation of the plan by countries and alignment with the plan will be influenced by the status of the ICT infrastructure and their ability to ensure alignment with the plan.

- A key measure of the effectiveness of the system is the time lag between registration and certification (particularly of birth): several months are sometimes necessary which represent a burden for the poorest people.
- The development of coherent and effective CRVS systems relies on the following necessary conditions to succeed:
  1. The full coverage of the country;
  2. Reliable statistics for demography and health;
  3. International comparability of results.
- The budget estimate for the proposed medium term plan should be revised to ensure adequate funding for priority areas; also the repartition of the budget should increase the allocation for statistical activities from 6 to 15 per cent.
- The contribution of a CR system (especially the right to a name and identity) as an investment for political and civil stability should be highlighted in the plan including illustrating clear linkages to other important government programmes, such as national identification programmes.
- National assessment reports and regional repository databases should be considered.

36. Concerning financial issues:

- It was proposed that CRVS administration and operation should be integrated with other government structures and services at all levels. Such measures will help in minimizing the resource requirements for CRVS. Nevertheless, CRVS systems may require heavy investments (especially for post conflict countries, which would need a permanent fund), at the following levels:
  1. Human resources;
  2. Configuration of the premises.
  3. Logistics, mostly IT for data capture;
  4. Adapted stationary for certification, registers, etc.
- Need to create synergy between the various ministries involved : each country should indicate the ministries that should be financially supported with respect to CRVS operations.
- It is necessary to coordinate actions of funding partners involved in the improvement of CRVS systems in Africa at national, regional and international levels.

***Recommendations***

37. These included:

- Provisions for CRVS systems in NSDS.
- Involve CSOs and NSOs in advocacy and communication strategies for CRVS.
- Countries should consider free access to birth registration and issuance of certificates.
- The organizing partners for this conference should develop a programme of action leading to the eventual signing of a charter by countries to adopt the medium term plan.
- It is recommended that UNECA should establish a substantive post on civil registration with appropriate support staff at the African Centre for Statistics.

- In finalizing the draft regional mid-term plan, the scope of the objectives should be expanded to include such global concerns as child protection, gender issues, funding and rural coverage; the time provided for the implementation of the mid-term plan should be increased to five years to adequately cover all the issues.

## **H. Meeting with country experts**

38. During this session, the invited experts were joined by the country experts accompanying the Ministers to the main Ministerial Conference. This expanded plenary received the reports of the Anglophone and Francophone breakout groups on their discussions of specific points raised during parallel sessions.

39. Both groups had the same point of view on the necessity to put all the proposed subjects in background documents as technical, operational and policy issues and in conclusions and recommendations of the meeting report. The major points raised during the ensuing discussion are as follows:

- The necessity for recording causes of death as part of civil registration needs further discussion. Among the issues to be clarified is the responsibility for establishing and reporting this cause of death – whether should be done by an expert such as a physician. The World Health Organization’s recommendation on verbal autopsy was also discussed.
- Cultural sensitivities regarding disclosing causes of death should be respected; some customs regard cause of death as confidential information that should not be disclosed to everybody. South Africa and Mauritania were cited as best practice examples on the management of such confidential information.
- The advantages of free access to registration were discussed, touching on several aspects:
  - Free registration will contribute towards achieving the target of maintaining exhaustive records through the CR systems.
  - CR systems may result in gains, because they could be less expensive than censuses, with the possibility of future incomes through legislation to charge for extra copies of certificates.
- Civil registration staff should be trained to ensure a system with good quality data.
- There is a need to standardize the set of variables to be included in the CR forms with international guidelines. Further discussion is needed in respect of the inclusion of variables such as “tribe” due to the possibility of misuse of such data.

## **I. Recommendations of the Meeting**

40. After considering the reports and background documents presented during the meeting, as well as issues raised during the discussions, the group of experts made the following recommendations to the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration.

### ***Technical issues***

1. Countries should develop comprehensive legal frameworks for civil registration systems, with associated strategies to derive vital statistics from the registers.

2. Universities and regional statistical training institutions should develop appropriate curricula for building capacity and improving CRVS in Africa. The African Group on Statistical Training (AGROST) should consider adopting CRVS among its agendas.
3. Support for establishing systematic and scientific methods and procedures for monitoring and evaluation.
4. Countries should integrate late registrations through appropriate techniques and procedure.
5. The practice of assigning causes of death is important and hence steps need to be taken to encourage countries to adopt the World Health Organization's standard classification of causes of death and practice of verbal autopsy as many deaths in African countries occur outside health facilities.
6. Countries should develop appropriate technical and operational mechanisms to interface CRVS systems with other demographic and social statistical undertakings.

### ***Operational and advocacy issues***

7. Any implementation guideline should include provisions for use of Information and communication technologies for the operation of CRVS systems, as well as arrangements for archiving and managing relevant CRVS data and information.
8. Proposed programmes must reflect cultural and social conditions specific to Africa.
9. Special arrangements need to be made for creating awareness for the registration of events in rural areas.
10. Implementation of awareness raising campaigns on the procedures and importance of CR, in particular through community outreach programmes should take into consideration potential barriers to registration.
11. Involve CSOs and NGOs in advocacy and communication strategies for CRVS.
12. Free access should be provided for CRVS educational messages on public media organizations.

### ***Policy issues***

13. AUC should establish Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration as a standing regional platform that will meet biannually to take stock of progress made by the region on CRVS and to also provide a forum for discussions on political and policy issues related to CRVS in Africa.
14. The Statistical Commission for African (StatCom-Africa) as the apex inter-governmental body responsible for statistics in the region, to establish a Working Group on CRVS.
15. CR to be enshrined in the national constitutions and charters, given its importance for public policy, good governance, human rights, rights of children, and as a basis for reliable vital statistics which are a sound basis for all stages of evidence-based decision-making and monitoring and evaluation of subnational, national, subregional, regional and international development.
16. Public participation is a key element for effective CRVS. Therefore specific weight must be put into raising public awareness, as well as knowledge creation on CRVS among government officials.
17. Improvements are needed in almost all the areas of concern i.e.: the formulation of appropriate CR laws, enforcement of the laws, the establishment of efficient CR services, compliance with international standards in terms of, coverage and procedures, availability of statistical capacities to compile and process data, and routine dissemination of vital statistics.

18. National governments need to commit themselves toward improving CR as well as vital statistics as both have crucial impact on the lives of individuals, society-at-large, planning, development and decision-making. Without such a commitment followed-up by concrete actions in that regard the improvement in these areas is not likely to occur. Specifically, the meeting recommended that:
  - Countries should take full advantage of the ongoing sectoral reform programmes, democratization and decentralization processes in Africa to bring CR services to the people.
  - Countries should revisit and update their CR laws and statistical legislation in line with current international best practices and take measures that ensure proper implementation.
  - National improvement programmes should be country led and owned.
  - Development partners should support national initiatives and programmes, including aligning their assistance accordingly.
19. The issue of fees for registration be revisited and Governments should consider making registration free of charge and also free issuance of certificates, specifically during first time registration.
20. Countries should use UN guidelines and recommendations as a basis for their CRVS improvement programme.
21. To achieve the goal of universal coverage, registration offices need to be as close as possible to the target population. Governments need therefore to establish central and subnational registration offices, including in rural areas and ensure their proper functioning and accessibility.
22. International organizations and countries should push for universal CR focusing on measurement of progress in the MDGs set to be achieved by 2015.
23. Countries should allocate adequate financial and human resources to support CRVS systems.
24. Countries should adopt laws and policies that ensure timely and compulsory civil registration, including births occurring among refugees and internally displaced persons, within their national territory, with guarantee for equal access to CR for all persons, regardless of nationality, immigration or marital status.
25. There should also be provisions for flexible and easily accessible late registration procedures for those who were not registered immediately on occurrence of the event. However, there is need for further discussions specifically on the inherent implications on nationality and citizenship of birth registration and issuance of birth certificates to non-nationals, including refugees.
26. Countries should adopt practices that remove physical and economic barriers hampering the registration of displaced persons in their territory, such as waiving registration fees or bringing registration services close to refugee/IDPs areas.
27. To ensure that law on CRVS meets international guidelines such as those set forth in the *United Nations Handbook on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: Preparation of a Legal Framework* and evidence-based legislative drafting techniques should be used to draft comprehensive organic law, subsidiary rules/administrative regulations, and operational manuals; this will ensure that the laws are based on detailed evidence about the specific patterns of behaviour that occur within national and local jurisdictions.
28. ECA, AfDB and AUC should finalize the proposed medium-term regional plan and guidelines on CRVS, with inputs from the meeting and call upon countries to adopt and use them in their quest to improve their respective CRVS systems.
29. Include provisions for CRVS systems in NSDSs and other statistical plans.

30. The organizing partners for the conference should develop a programme of action leading to the eventual signing of a charter by countries to adopt a comprehensive regional plan for CRVS.
31. The Executive Secretary of UNECA, who is also a member of the MDG Africa Working Group, should establish a substantive post on CRVS, with appropriate support staff at the ACS to ensure the sustainability of ongoing efforts at improving CRVS systems in Africa.



**Annex 1: Programme of Work of the Preparatory Meeting of Experts for the First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, 10-12 August 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Tuesday 10 August 2010</b>		
<b>8:30 – 9:00</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
	<b>Session I: Opening Session</b>	
9:00 – 9:25	Opening Statements: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcoming Remarks: Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa</li> <li>2. Opening Remarks: Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission</li> <li>3. Opening Remarks: Dr. Charles Lufumpa, Director, Statistics Department of the African Development Bank</li> <li>4. Opening Statement: H.E. Mr. Ahmed Shide, State Minister of Finance and Economic Development of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</li> </ol>	
9:25-9:30	Election of the Bureau	
<b>9:30 10:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
10:00 – 10:30	Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work	
10:30 – 11:00	Objectives of the Meeting	ECA
	<b>Session II: Why Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa?</b>	
11:00 – 11:30	Importance and Services of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	UNSD
11:30 – 12:00	Technical, Administrative and Operational Aspects of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	UNSD
12:00 – 12:15	International Standards and Guidelines and their Importance to Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa	UNSD
12:15 – 13:00	General Discussions	
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
14:00 – 14:30	Challenges and Opportunities for the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa	AfDB
14:30 – 15:00	Implementing Improvements in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	HMN
15:00 – 15:45	General Discussions	
15:45 – 16:00	Gender Perspective of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa	ACGS
<b>16:00 – 16:30</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
16:30 – 16:45	Accelerating Birth Registration in Africa	UNICEF
16:45 – 17:00	The Inclusion of Displaced Populations in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics	UNHCR
17:00 – 17:15	International Experience on Law Drafting Techniques and its Application to Civil Registration Laws	Boston University
17:15 – 18:00	General Discussion	

<b>Wednesday 11 August 2010</b>		
<b>Session III - Regional Initiatives and Strategies</b>		
8:45 – 9:00	The Tanzania Regional Workshop Outcomes and Progress on the Implementation of the Recommendations	ECA
9:00 – 9:30	The Proposed Medium-Term Regional Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Plan	ECA
9:30 – 10:00	General Discussion	
10:00 – 10:30	Partnership Building and Resource Requirements and Mobilization	AfDB
10:30 – 10:45	Organization and Expectations from the Ministerial Conference	AUC
<b>10:45 – 11:15</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
11:15 – 12:00	General Discussion	
<b>Session IV – Technical, Operational and Policy Issues</b>		
12:00 – 12:30	Issues to be Addressed in Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa:	ECA
12:30 – 13:00	General Discussion	
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
<b>Session V: Breakaway Sessions in TWO PARALLEL Groups on Technical, Operational and Policy Issues</b>		
14:00 – 16:30	Breakaway on Technical, Operational and Policy Issues	
<b>16:30 – 17:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
17:00 – 18:00	Report back to Plenary	
<b>Thursday 12 August 2010</b>		
<b>Session VI – Meeting with Country Experts</b>		
8:45 – 9:30	Presentation of draft Conclusions and Recommendations to Country Experts	Experts
9:30 – 10:30	General Discussion	
<b>10:30 – 11:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
11:00 – 12:45	General Discussions and Endorsing the Final Draft Conclusions and Recommendations of the Expert Meetings	
<b>12:45 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
14:00 – 14:15	Any other Business	
<b>14:15 – 15:00</b>	<b>Closing of the Meeting</b>	
	Closing remarks : •UNSD •AfDB •AUC •UNECA	
15:00 – 17:30	Country Experts Briefing their Respective Ministers	
<b>18:30 – 20:30</b>	<b>Cocktail</b>	

## **II. Report of the First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration**

### **A. Introduction**

1. The first Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 13 and 14 August 2010. The meeting was organized jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission and hosted by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

## **B. Attendance**

2. The meeting was attended by 41 Ministers responsible for Civil Registration of the following member States: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, the Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, the Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

3. More than 14 Embassies of African countries' representatives in Addis Ababa participated. Embassy of Nigeria, Chad Embassy, Embassy of the Sudan, Embassy of Namibia, Senegal Embassy, Embassy of South Africa, Algeria Embassy, Embassy of Morocco, Embassy of Guinea, Zambia Embassy, Togo Embassy, Embassy of Zimbabwe, Embassy of Mauritius, Embassy of Mali, Embassy of Libya, Embassy of D.R. Congo, Embassy of Burundi, Embassy of Lesotho and Djibouti Embassy attended through their Ambassadors and Senior Officials.

4. The following United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were also represented: UNSD, UNICEF, UNICEF Liaison office to AU/UNECA, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNESCO-IICBA, UNECA, HMN/WHO. Representatives from the following organizations and institutions were also present: AFRISTAT, Comunita' Di Sant' Egidio, Plan International Region of - Eastern and Southern Africa, EUROSTAT, Plan Uganda, Uganda Telecom (UTC), Boston- University, IFORD, ENSEA, EGLDAM, Ethiopian Statistics Association, Addis Ababa City Administration, Children and Women Commission MEHRC Ethiopia, Ethiopian Public Health Association (EPHA), Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia, DSW Ethiopia, Cybersoft Ethiopia, Plan Ethiopia, African Child Policy forum (ACPF), Ministry of Health of Ethiopia, ETU, Ethiopian Parliament, ANPPCAN – Ethiopia, Save the children Finland.

## **C. Conference Opening**

5. The Conference was opened by Mr. Teshome Toga, the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, representing His Excellency, Mr. Girma Woldegiorgis, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Opening statements were also made by Ms. Jennifer Kargbo, Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; and Professor Mthuli Ncube, Vice-President and Chief Economist of the African Development Bank.

6. In his opening speech, Mr. Toga informed the Ministers that Ethiopia has recognized the need for a strong National Statistical System (NSS) to manage the socio-economic changes taking place in the country and address the current challenges facing Africa, which include climate change, global economic slowdown and shortage of food. He noted that vital statistics are a crucial and irreplaceable component of the NSS and that CR is the best source of detailed, accurate, relevant and timely vital statistics. However, not all decision makers recognized the importance of CRVS. The Ministerial Conference was therefore important for strengthening the political commitment of African governments to enhance their CRVS systems, and increase awareness among professionals on the role of CRVS as an input in measuring development progress and social change in Africa. He noted that the conference was also an opportunity to strengthen partnerships, particularly among professionals, through the exchange of views, ideas and best practices. He therefore urged participants representing African countries to promote CR as a priority item on the development agenda, and should strongly cooperate and support each other in establishing and strengthening CRS that would benefit every citizen. He called on the regional and international development

partners to join hands in supporting Africa in this initiative that would promote democracy and good governance in the continent.

7. A welcome address was delivered by the Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNECA, Ms. Jennifer Kargbo. In her address, she reiterated the importance of CRVS for Africa, listing the areas in which the systems have direct relevance. She outlined the challenges faced in establishing complete systems and the opportunities that currently existed to improve them. In view of these challenges, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission initiated a joint undertaking to bring CRVS improvement to the top of the statistical development agenda. Under the umbrella of the African Statistical Coordination Committee, the three pan-African organizations have realized the necessity of coordinating and mobilizing human, technical and operational resources at the regional level to support countries in improving these systems. She noted that the conference was a step toward that commitment and collective responsibility to move the regional ground breaking agenda forward. She explained that as part of the initiative, a medium-term regional plan has been developed, as well as various technical and operational regional guidelines, all compatible with international technical guidelines, principles and recommendations.

8. Opening remarks were also delivered by Professor Mthuli Ncube, Vice-President and Chief Economist of the African Development Bank. He reiterated the need for civil registration, the challenges faced by Africa and the initiatives taken by the Bank in close collaboration with ECA. He further informed the Ministers that through its statistical capacity-building programme, the Bank is assisting African countries to incorporate issues of CRVS in their national statistical development strategies. As a follow-up activity following the conference, the bank will engage its partner training institutions to develop short-term courses on CRVS systems for targeted audiences. Also, the Bank will allocate funds to support civil registration activities in its Phase 3 statistical capacity-building programme to be launched in 2011. He urged the Ministers to use their high level strategic positions to champion the cause of strengthening civil registration system in their respective countries through advocacy, setting up appropriate legal frameworks and providing necessary resources.

#### **D. Election of Bureau**

9. The Bureau of the Conference was unanimously elected as follows:

Chairperson:	Ethiopia
Vice-Chairpersons:	Democratic Republic of the Congo Burkina Faso Zimbabwe
Rapporteur:	Egypt

#### **E. Making the Case for Improved Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa**

10. Ms. Dorothy Rozga, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Liaison Office to the AU and UNECA and Mr. Chysantus Ache, UNHCR Representative to the AU and UNECA made brief statements to support the case for improving civil registration in Africa. They outlined the work of their respective agencies relevant to CRVS and made additional suggestions for the consideration of the ministers. UNICEF called for the adoption of a goal to achieve universal birth registration by 2015 and informed the Ministers that it is supporting the AUC's Department of Economic Affairs to establish a new online database platform known as AfricaInfo. UNHCR called for provision to be made for refugees and displaced persons.

11. Mr. Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) also made a brief intervention on the need to improve CRVS systems in Africa. He defined CR as a universal, continuous, permanent and compulsory recording of the occurrence of vital events pertaining to the population in accordance with the law of each country. A distinguishing feature of civil registration, compared to other data collection methods, is the fact that it is mandated by law, making it universal, continuous and permanent. It is therefore an ideal source for vital statistics, covering the whole country while at the same time presenting the possibility to generate small-area statistics that are invaluable for local governance and for assessing the needs to adjust policy according to the profiles of separate regions. He also revisited the problems of civil registration in Africa, listed some countries where progress has been made, highlighted the work of UNSD in the area and pledged the continued support of UNSD in the development of CRVS systems from the technical aspect, emphasizing best practices, establishing and maintaining network of professionals at regional and international levels, and providing technical assistance as needed.

#### **F. Adoption of Agenda and Programme of Work**

12. The conference adopted the following agenda:

- i. Registration
- ii. Introduction and Children's Song
- iii. Opening of the Conference
- iv. Election of the Bureau
- v. Making the Case for Improved Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa
- vi. Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work
- vii. Background on Revitalization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa
- viii. Reforming and Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa
  - a) The need for improved civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa
  - b) Legal, administrative and statistical purposes and functions of civil registration and vital statistics systems
  - c) Management and operations of civil registration and vital statistics in the African context
  - d) Generation and use of health and demographic statistics and information
  - e) Challenges and opportunities for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa
  - f) Implementing improvements in CRVS systems
  - g) Resource requirements and administration for CRVS systems in Africa
  - h) International experience on law drafting techniques and its application to civil registration laws
- ix. Country Case Presentations by Selected Countries
  - a) Best practice country case
  - b) Countries with ongoing efforts
  - c) Countries with challenges
- x. Proposed Medium-term Regional Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Plan
- xi. Presentation of the Draft Conclusions and Recommendations
  - Discussion of conclusions and recommendations from expert meetings
- xii. Discussion and Resolution of the Ministerial Meeting

- Resolutions and recommendations of the ministerial meeting
- xiii. Any other business
- xiv. Closing of the Conference

#### **G. Background on Revitalization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa**

13. In this session, ECA gave a presentation that highlighted the situation of CRVS systems in Africa. The Commission gave comprehensive background information on the situation of CRVS in the past years in the region. The presentation further explored the implication of inadequate CRVS at national, regional and international levels. The absence of continuous, disaggregated and time-series demographic and social statistics data in most African countries was attributed to the absence of adequate vital statistics from civil registration system. It was demonstrated that a well functioning CRVS system is the conventional data source for most MDG indicators. It was mentioned that due to the absence of adequate CRVS systems, most African countries are lacking the required data inputs for measuring and monitoring MDG indicators. Moreover, the absence of adequate CRVS system in a country will create gaps in managing health and education services, preparation and issuance of passport and other travel documents.

#### **H. Reforming and Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa**

14. Under this agenda item, the conference received presentations from the AUC, UNSD, ECA, AfDB, the Health Metrics Network (HMN) and Boston University. The presentations and discussions continued to emphasize the need for improving and reforming CRVS systems in Africa. The AUC listed several legal frameworks and initiatives that would require CRVS systems to implement. These include the 1963 Charter of the Organisation of African Unity, the African Charter on Statistics and the SHaSA.

15. UNSD listed various uses of different categories of data from CRVS systems. The functions of CRVS systems include the provision of accurate vital statistics for good and efficient governance to be based on factual and informed decision making process.

16. ECA highlighted the integration of the two components of the system: civil registration as well as vital statistics in all aspects, technical, organizational and operational. The presentation identified the areas and modalities of integration. The register was at the centre of the integration. The two-way links of the systems, civil registration as the source of statistics and vital statistics as the technical arm for the registration system were considered as the rationale for integrating the two systems. The importance of partnership and collaboration among the different actors, the necessity for creating demand for vital event evidences, monitoring of user satisfaction and measuring achievements and successes were broadly dealt with in the presentation.

17. AfDB noted with concern that civil registration systems are inadequate and incomplete in a majority of African countries and emphasized the need for urgent remedial action. They also reviewed the need for, and problems associated with partnerships in reforming and improving civil registration, and emphasized the need for establishing advocacy fora, citing the current Ministerial conference and the African Symposium for Statistical Development (ASSD) as good examples at the regional level.

18. HMN emphasized the important role that the health sector should play in implementing civil registration because many births and deaths occur in health facilities. The presentation also described HMN's initiative for monitoring of vital events using information technology (MoVE-IT).

19. The International Consortium for Law and Development (ICLAD) of Boston University described the evidence-based legislative method, which seeks to develop solutions to overcome causes of observed problematic behaviours, rather than copying laws.

## **I. Country Presentations**

20. Selected countries made presentations on the operation of their CRVS systems. The countries were Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Tanzania. In Cameroon, the operational CR law was passed in 1981. This law, supplemented by another decree in 1987, provides for two types of registration systems, namely, the principal registration centres in every commune and diplomatic or consular mission abroad, and the special registration centres where the size of the territory, population density or communication difficulties justify their establishment by order of the Minister of Territorial Administration. The events registered are births, adoptions and legitimizations; marriages and deaths. The Directorate of Statistics and National Accounts, established in the National Institute of Statistics in 2001 with the support of UNFPA, periodically derives data for the demographic database from the administrative records of births, marriages and deaths. However, the system has some limitations, mainly the lack of specific provisions in the law for coordination and the transmission of records from the registers to the vital statistics services.

21. The presentation made by Egypt focussed on the operations of the Civil Status Organization (CSO) established in 1962 and given the sole responsibility to provide registration services. CSO provides national identity cards for Egyptian citizens, as well as birth, marriage, divorce and death certificates. CSO has converted all its manual records to digital databases since 1990. It has 10 regional ID issuing offices with about 600 computerised citizen service offices. It produces its own cards in its state-of-the-art factories and is available for consultations and shares its expertise.

22. Ethiopia is one of the countries with no operational national civil registration system. The country also does not have fully functional civil registration law. It was reported that the country is in the process of legislating a new law on civil registration. In the presentation, emphasis was given on challenges in generating key socio-demographic indicators for subnational administration and hence problems encountered in addressing statistical data demands from various users. Ethiopia strongly recommended following the UN guidelines and recommendations in efforts in improving CRVS systems.

23. In Sierra Leone, civil registration operation was reported to have started in 1791. Enacting civil registration law dates back to 1801. However, the 1983 birth and death act is the latest that made registration of the events mandatory. It was reported that the registration coverage in Sierra Leone is very low with lots of structural and management challenges.

24. Sudan reported that civil registration operation started in 1900 but strict strategic measures were taken in 1998. It was also mentioned that the first Law of Civil Rolls was issued in 2001. The objective of the civil rolls is to improve the civil registration system that would provide more accurate and dependable evidence and information for the justice administration, public services, such as, issuance of national identification cards, passports and immigration administration, and updating public databases, like business and electoral databases with the support of information technology (IT) solution. Sudan considers civil registration as the heart of the e-Governance system. The presentation further explained how the registration system works with a full automated and centralized operational arrangement. Sudan shared challenges facing the improvement initiatives of the country, including the high costs of the IT supported project. The presentation highlighted the urgency of implementation due to various pressures, such as the rapid economical change,

continuous population movement and regional political conflicts. The vast size of the country and the stretched open borders and managing the new IT system were the other challenges.

#### **J. Proposed Medium-term Regional Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Plan**

25. The medium-term regional CRVS plan was presented jointly by the ECA and AfDB. It was indicated that the regional plan emanated from the recommendation of the Tanzania workshop, primarily for addressing the regional agenda on reforming and improving CRVS systems in Africa. From the presentation it was understood that the ultimate goal of the plan was to support African governments to build modern and accountable public administrations and measure and monitor their respective development efforts. The presentation further explained the overall and specific objectives of the plan, strategies and the required institutional framework in implementing the plan. The activities included in the plan were presented under six thematic areas, namely capacity-building; innovation and harmonization of techniques and approaches; promoting knowledge and sharing good practices; strengthening regional and national vital statistics production; promoting study and research; and building partnership, peer-support groups and promoting country ownership.

26. The plan covers three year period from 2010 to 2012. The total financial resource requirement is estimated at \$ 2.706 million. It was reported that capacity-building activities have the biggest share, 38.3 per cent followed by partnership building, peer support and promoting country ownership, 25.5 per cent. Some associated risks in implementing the plan were indicated, among them includes the situation in countries with conflict and political unrest, impact of the global financial crises and donors uncoordinated intervention. The plan also assumes that national governments will take CRVS as a national priority and the support from donors would be improved.

#### **K. Presentation of Draft Conclusions and Recommendations**

27. The report of the preparatory experts' group meeting (EGM) for the conference was presented by the chairperson. The report contained 29 recommendations for consideration and adoption by the conference. The EGM recommendations were grouped under the following headings: Policy Issues (13 recommendations); Technical Issues (six recommendations); and Operational and Advocacy Issues (seven recommendations).

#### **L. Discussion and Resolution of the Ministerial Meeting**

28. The draft Ministerial Declaration was presented by the rapporteur of the bureau. In the declaration, the Ministers fully endorsed the recommendations of the preparatory EGM. They passed three resolutions and called upon ECA, AfDB, AUC and other partners to take specific actions to build capacity and support national efforts.

29. The Ministers discussed the draft declaration in detail and made amendments that were recorded immediately by the secretariat. The statement was subsequently adopted unanimously. The final adopted version presented as follows:



## **Declaration of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa**

1. We, African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 13 to 14 August 2010, for the first ever conference organized on this subject, being convened by 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. Are 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 CRVS information for implementation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa and the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics and promotion of 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 to improve them, 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 CRVS 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. 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 players 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, and to allocate adequate human and financial resources for this purpose;

- 8.3 Intensify awareness-raising campaigns on the procedures and importance of CRVS systems, to ensure their effective functioning.
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 Africa Symposium on 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 develop or enhance appropriate curricula aimed at building capacity on 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.

#### **M. Closing of the Conference**

30. A closing remark by the ECA Deputy Executive Secretary was read by the Director of ACS. The Deputy Executive Secretary reiterated the commitments of the experts gathered in Dar-es Salaam, Tanzania a year before, expressing the need for organizing a high-level ministerial meeting on CR. The meetings over the last five days were witness to how realistic that recommendation had been. The First Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration had been a milestone and historic event in bringing CRVS onto the regional agenda. The Deputy Executive Secretary reaffirmed the commitment of the regional organizations to provide the necessary support for implementing the Declaration of the Conference. She specifically mentioned the human capacity gap that would be challenging in addressing the technical support demands of member States. She also underscored the need to ensure that programmes and projects on CR were owned and led by the countries themselves, and immediate need to prepare national plans on improving civil registration in their respective countries.

31. The Deputy Executive Secretary expressed appreciation for the uniqueness of the conference as it had given ECA, AUC and AfDB additional dimensions through which to engage with member States in those critical, sensitive and urgent issues of setting up instruments and mechanisms needed in the areas of human rights, public and justice system administrations, and supporting the implementation of decentralization and democratization processes. In conclusion, she expressed her satisfaction with the deliberations of the meeting and assured the Ministers the readiness and commitment of ECA and its partners to help in realizing the outcomes of the conference.

32. Finally, the Chairperson of the Conference, H.E. Mr. Berhan Hailu, Minister of Justice of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia expressed his satisfaction with the active participation of the delegates to the conference. He assured participants of his Government's commitment to taking forward the resolutions of the conference as well as for taking measures to upgrade the CRVS situation in his country. Finally, he wished all participants a safe journey to their respective countries.

**Annex 2: Programme of Work for the First Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, 10-12 August 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
<b>Friday 13 August 2010</b>		
<b>8:30 – 9:00</b>	<b>Registration</b>	
	<b>Session I: Opening Session</b>	
9:00-9:30	Introduction and Children’s Song	
	<b>Opening Statements:</b>	
	1. Welcoming remarks: Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa	
	2. Opening remarks: Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission	
9:30 – 10:40	3. Opening remarks: Professor Mthuli Ncube, Vice-President and Chief Economist of the African Development Bank	
	4. Opening Statement: His Excellency Mr. Girma Woldegiorgis President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	
10:40-10:45	<b>Election of the Bureau</b>	
<b>10:45 – 11:15</b>	<b>Coffee Break and Opening of Exhibition</b>	
11:15 – 11:30	Keynote Address by Dr. Paul Cheung, Director of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD)	
11:30 – 12:00	Making the Case for Improved Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa	
	1. Ms. Dorothy Rozga, Deputy Regional Director, UNICEF Liaison Office to the AU/ UNECA and ESARO	
	2. Mr. Chrysantus Ache, UNHCR Representative to the AU and UNECA	
12:00 – 12:10	Adoption of the Agenda and Programme of Work	
<b>12:10 – 12:45</b>	<b>Session II: Background on Revitalization of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa</b>	<b>ECA</b>
<b>12:45 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
	<b>Session III: Reforming and Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa</b>	
14:00 – 14:15	The Need for Improved Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa	AUC
14:15 – 14:30	Legal, Administrative and Statistical Purposes and Functions of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	UNSD
14:30 – 14:45	Management and Operations of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in the African Context	ECA
14:45 – 15:00	Generation and Use of Health and Demographic Statistics and Information	UNSD
15:00 – 15:45	General Discussions	
<b>15:45 – 16:15</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
16:15 – 16:45	Challenges and Opportunities for Improving Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa	AfDB
16:45 – 17:00	Implementing Improvements in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems	HMN
17:00 – 17:15	Resource Requirements and Administration of Civil	AfDB

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Responsible</b>
17:15 – 17:30	Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa International Experience on Law Drafting Techniques and its Application to Civil Registration Laws	Boston University
17:30 – 18:00	General Discussions	
18:30 – 20:30	Reception by the Host Government	
<b>Saturday 14 August 2010</b>		
	<b>Session IV: Country Case Presentations by Selected Countries</b>	
<b>9:00 – 10:30</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Best practice country case (Tunisia)</i></li> <li>• <i>Countries with ongoing efforts (Ethiopia/ Tanzania/Uganda/Guinea Conakry)</i></li> <li>• <i>Countries with challenges (Sierra Leone/Cameroon/Sudan)</i></li> </ul>	Countries
<b>10:30 – 11:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
11:00 – 11:30	General Discussions	
	<b>Session V: Proposed Medium-term Regional Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Plan</b>	
11:30 – 12:00	Presentation of the Medium-term Regional Plan	<b>ECA</b>
12:00 – 12:30	General Discussions	
	<b>Session VI: Presentation of Draft Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	
12:30 – 13:30	Discussion of Conclusions and Recommendations from Expert Meeting	Experts
<b>13:30 – 14:30</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
	<b>Session VII: Discussion and Resolution of the Ministerial Meeting</b>	
16:00 – 17:30	Resolutions and recommendations of the ministerial meeting	
17:30 – 18:00	Any other business	
<b>18:00 – 18:30</b>	<b>Closing of the Conference</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Closing remarks by UNECA</i></li> <li>• <i>Wrap-up and closing remarks by the Chair of the Conference</i></li> </ul>	