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**REPORT OF THE 2ND AU CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION,
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 3 – 7 SEPTEMBER 2012**

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DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 3-7 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Background

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Development Bank (AfDB) and African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with other UN partners are implementing a continent wide programme on improving civil registration and vital statistics systems. The programme known as the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System (APAI-CRVS) is guided by the policy directives given by the ministers responsible for civil registration in their first conference held in August 2010 in Addis Ababa for reforming CRVS in African countries through a holistic approach keeping in view the multi-disciplinary nature of the systems. The Secretariat for the programme is housed in ACS. The ministers also asked the AUC to consider institutionalizing the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics as a standing regional platform to meet once every two years to take stock of the progress made and provide guidance for improvement of CRVS in the African countries.

2. The Second Conference was Ministers responsible for Civil Registration was held on 3-7 September 2012, at the Durban International Convention Center, in Durban, South Africa. The theme of the conference was *'Improving civil registration institutional and Human Infrastructure'*. The Conference entailed two meetings, the first being a three day Experts meeting held on 3-5 September 2012 in the same venue, followed by the ministerial meeting, held on 6th and 7th September 2012. The meeting of experts served as a preparatory forum for the ministerial meeting's deliberations.

3. The Conference was jointly organized by the AUC, AfDB, ECA, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, WHO and HMN. The meeting was attended by close to 400 participants in the following categories: Ministers responsible for civil registration, ministers responsible for health from selected countries, heads of civil registration and national statistics offices, statistical training institutions, Regional Economic Communities, Non-governmental organizations, private firms dealing with civil registration processes and products, community based organizations and a group of Young African Statisticians of the Isibalo capacity building programme run by Statistics South Africa.

4. The Assembly of the Union (Ref; Assembly/AU/Dec.424) endorsed the recommendation of First Ministerial Conference on the institutionalization of the Conference as a standing regional forum of the African Union to deal with matters concerning civil registration.

Purpose

5. The Conference was held to take stock of the progress made against the declaration of African ministers responsible for civil registration during their first

conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in August 2010. The ministers in their first conference recognized the important role yet poor state of civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in most countries on the continent. The ministers therefore mandated the ECA, the AUC and AfDB to support various technical processes that would ensue in the implementation of Africa's agenda on accelerated improvement of CRVS systems. Among the key recommendations of the ministers was the need to undertake a regional assessment study on the status of CRVS systems in the region. The specific activities recommended for implementation are outlined on a detailed regional Medium Term Plan (MTP) which was also endorsed by the ministers during their first conference.

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

Brief proceedings

7. The conference meeting was opened by His Excellency the President of the Republic of South Africa, Honourable Jacob Zuma. Also in attendance and joining the president in the opening of the meeting were the Minister of the Department of Home Affairs and Chairperson elect of the AUC Her. Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the AUC Dr. Maxwell Mkwezalamba, Director of the Statistics Department of AfDB, Dr. Charles Lufumpa, and the Director of the African Center for Statistics of the ECA Dr. Dimitri Sanga, representing the Executive Secretary of the ECA.

8. A keynote statement was delivered by Professor Miriam Were, a Member Independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health commissioned by the United Nations Secretary General.

9. The meeting kicked off on a discussion that aimed at positioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) within the African integration agenda. The session provided insight on the role of CRVS in addressing the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of the agenda. Various presentations were made by key regional and international organizations on the theme and also by a representative of the Isibalo Young African Statisticians.

10. The presentations made were as listed below:

- CRVS and African Integration: AUC;
- Children's and Women's Rights: UNICEF;
- Refugees Issues and Related Challenges: UNHCR;
- Public Health Service and Management: WHO-HMN;
- Monitoring of Development Indicators: UNFPA;
- Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA): ASSD Chairperson;
- CRVS in Africa: An Emergency in an Emergency: Isibalo Young African Statisticians.

11. During the third session, a presentation on the APAI-CRVS was made by a representative of the regional CRVS Secretariat. The presentation covered the key directions given by ministers responsible for civil registration during their first conference, a brief history of the programme, the layout/ structure of the programme, the status of the implementation of the medium-term CRVS plan (MTP), different actors and stakeholders engaged in the programme and proposed future actions for the programme. During this session the APAI-CRVS policy document was also presented for endorsement by the ministers.

12. The results of the regional assessment study and a formal progress report on the regional initiative was presented by the CRVS Secretariat during the fourth session. This was followed by a session on demonstration of country experiences in various aspects of CRVS. During this session, selected countries made presentation on the themes: CRVS and National ID, CRVS and Application of IT, Service Delivery and CRVS, CRVS in Post Conflict Situations and Monitoring of CRVS Operations.

13. The sixth session was a technical session which was covered the regional CRVS Secretariat. Two technical papers were on the themes:

- a) Registering Death, Assigning and Certifying Causes of Death and Compilation of Death Statistics under the APAI-CRVS;
- b) Strategic Action Points for Improving CRVS Institutional and Human Infrastructure.

14. The first presentation proposed a shift in approach for improvement of death registration in Africa. The second presentation proposed approaches for addressing the existing institutional and human infrastructural challenges of CRVS on the continent.

15. During the seventh session, a review of the presentations made at the meeting and the possible policy directions these were leading to was done. The session was aimed at providing insights to the policy and programmatic issues that need to be reflected into the ministerial statement. This was followed by a presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Conference and finally the crafting of the ministerial statement.

Ministerial Declaration

16. The Ministers made a number of recommendations as a part of their Ministerial Statement (Annex 1). Some of the key recommendations are given below:

- a) 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 the countries, with guarantees of equal access to the system for all persons, regardless of nationality or legal status;
- c) Accord high priority to CRVS and ensure allocation of adequate human and financial resources for the day-to-day operations of CRVS in countries, including implementation of the national action plans in order to ensure sustainability and country ownership;
- d) 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;
- e) 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; and
- f) The African Union to allocate the necessary financial and technical resources in support of the CRVS development agenda.

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Annex 1

Ministerial Statement

Ministerial Statement

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, for his contribution to the development of Africa.
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;
15. In light of the recommendations 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;
- f) Invite the independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health to participate in the APAI-CRVS;
- g) 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;
- h) 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);
- i) Further strengthen and facilitate coordination between National Statistical Offices and Civil Registration Authorities in managing and monitoring the challenges of CRVS systems;
- j) Develop results-based monitoring and evaluation systems and tools to monitor and report on progress on CRVS;
- k) 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;

- l) Intensify awareness-raising campaigns to educate the public on the importance and procedures of CRVS to ensure their effective functioning.

Way forward

We urge:

16. 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;
17. 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, sub-regional and regional levels. We also request the Secretariat to undertake operational research in the area of death registration and certification of cause of death in Africa;
18. 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;
19. 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;
20. 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;
21. The African Union to allocate the necessary financial and technical resources in support of the CRVS development agenda.

We reaffirm:

22. 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;
23. 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.

2012

Report of The 2nd AU conference of ministers responsible for civil registration, Durban, South Africa, 3 – 7 September 2012

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