

Fifth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration

Lusaka Declaration

We, African Union Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, Identity Management, Health, and Information and Technology, gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, from 17 and 18 October 2019 during our fifth conference on the theme “*Innovative Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Foundation for Legal Identity Management.*”

PREAMBLE

CONSCIOUS of the fact that Africa is a developing Continent desirous of integration and prosperity, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena through a people centered and inclusive development as provided for in the universal and continental human and people’s rights instruments, AU Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals;

ACKNOWLEDGING the measures taken by several Member States to strengthen the integrity of identity management systems, including for asylum seekers, refugees and returnees, and IDPs, which contributes to closing the identity gap and improves the availability disaggregated vital data to facilitate humanitarian and development planning;

RECOGNIZING the importance of the Africa-CDC Programme on Mortality Surveillance and other partners efforts to improve the recording of deaths and cause of death as a public health imperative for countries to monitor progress towards Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, where 17 of the health and health-related indicators require a form of mortality measurement based on civil registration system data;

ALSO RECOGNIZING that integrated civil registration and identification systems are essential for promoting good governance, creating inclusive societies, protecting human rights, ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of public services, and tackling inequality; as well as providing an individual with essential legal documents to secure basic human, people’s and civil rights such as the right to a name, identity and nationality, and access to health care, education, employment, and social protection;

ACKNOWLEDGING that many of the civil registration and identification systems in Africa are fragmented and under-resourced, resulting in a large number of people with

no legal means of identification who are excluded from accessing various services to improve their well-being and from meaningful participation in the development process;

NOTING that armed conflicts, natural disasters, and human-made disasters in Africa have resulted in the forced displacement of large numbers of our citizens, who lack protection and humanitarian assistance, due to absence of registration services, which affects planning and durable solutions such as return, resettlement, and reintegration to their communities/countries following the cessation of hostilities;

FURTHER NOTING the provisions of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugees in Africa as well as the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, and the 2009 AU Kampala Convention on IDPs and that the legal identity for asylum seekers, refugees and returnees is the primary responsibility of host States and may also be administered by a mandated and recognized international body;

RECALLING the Yamoussoukro Declaration from the 3rd Conference of Ministers in charge of CRVS and the Ministerial resolutions requesting development partners to “support development of guidelines and recommendations for maintaining and managing civil registration in conflict and emergency situations as well as special circumstances by making use of experiences from countries having gone through such situations”;

RECOGNIZING the support of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in the improvement of migration statistics in Africa through the AUC-RECs-Statistics Sweden Programme on Capacity Building on Migration Statistics;

ALSO RECOGNIZING the importance of digital transformation for the achievement of Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and acknowledging the efforts made by the African Union Commission in collaboration with ECA, AfDB, RECs, World Bank, and other partners in developing a comprehensive Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa to harness the full benefits of digital transformation;

FURTHER RECOGNIZING the UN Secretary General’s initiative on digital cooperation to advance global multi-stakeholder dialogue to realize the potential of digital technologies for advancing human well-being while mitigating the risks;

COGNIZANT of the linkage that civil registration is a foundation for identity management and that the digitalization of CRVS provides a unique ability to eliminate duplication and inefficiency, a cost-effective way to identify individuals while providing greater access to public and private services and better gender inclusion, and

WELCOMES the opportunity for the modernization of the civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa through technological solutions that aim to build centralized digital civil registries for all vital events to enable wide access, inclusive coverage, and reduced costs through automated systems.

THE CONFERENCE:

CALL UPON AU Member States to effectively implement the 1969 OAU Convention on Specific Aspects of Refugees in Africa, the AU Convention on IDP and other Human Rights Laws with a view to reducing dependency on UNHCR and other partners for protection and assistance on registration of refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees, and particularly children born by single parents;

URGE AUC to implement the decision on the creation of the sub-committee on CR and submit the necessary documents to the relevant Policy Organs for consideration and adoption;

ENCOURAGE AU Member States to strengthen investment in digitization to facilitate interoperability between identity management systems for refugees and IDPs and the national Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems, within a framework of a strong data protection policy, as well as take steps to ensure the widespread recognition of identity documents issued to persons in need of international protection;

CALL UPON AU Member States to strengthen the collaboration between national civil registration offices, national statistical offices, health, and legal identity management;

URGE AU Member States to publish, annually, quality vital statistics from the civil registration records of vital events, including causes of deaths, to guide policy organs in developing strategies for the improvement of CRVS systems, and in support of Agenda 2063, Agenda 2030 for SDGs and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD@25);

REQUEST AUC and Africa CDC to provide guidance and support to AU Member States to mobilize resources for strengthening mortality surveillance systems and CRVS, and **ENCOURAGE** AUC and ECA to continue working with AU Member States on the implementation of the existing programmes, strategies as well as the decade on repositioning CRVS in Africa waiting for operationalization of the Sub-Committee;

REQUEST AUC and ECA to support countries in harmonizing legislations governing the civil registration and identity management including interoperability of systems by using appropriate information and communication technology assets;

FURTHER REQUEST UN Legal Identity Task Group to scale-up efforts in reducing invisibility in Africa by increasing the number of current pilot countries participating in the UN Legal Identity Agenda, in order for all countries in Africa to benefit from the holistic approach to registration in the shortest time possible, taking into account equitable geographic distribution;

REQUEST AUC, in collaboration with ECA, AfDB, CRVS Core Group, other partners, and private sector to create a knowledge platform, where AU Member States can share experiences and success stories to strengthen their CRVS and identity management systems, particularly on registration of refugees, returnees, IDPs, and migrants in Africa;

APPEAL to AUC, ECOWAS, IGAD, EAC, and SADC for the full implementation of the AUC-RECs-Statistics Sweden Pilot Programme on Capacity Building on Migration Statistics, and **REQUEST** AUC with the support of International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), Statistics Sweden, Statistics Norway, and other relevant international partners to develop a **Comprehensive Programme for the registration of migrants in the Civil Registration System** with the aim to strengthen AU Member States CRVS system to include migrants, build their capacities, and share good practices to produce and disseminate high quality vital data on migrants, and request AUC to lead the resource mobilization for the implementation of the programme;

URGE AUC, ECA, AfDB CRVS Core Group, and other partners to support AU Member States to set up sustained capacity-building systems at all levels to improve the production and dissemination of vital statistics from civil registration systems;

ENCOURAGE ECA, in collaboration with AUC, AfDB, CRVS Core Group, and other partners to strengthen its on-line monitoring framework for tracking progress made at national, regional levels regarding civil registration and vital statistics;

REQUEST AfDB, CRVS Core Group, and other partners to scale-up their technical and financial support to APAI-CRVS programme and AU Member States to strengthen their budget allocation for CRVS and identity management systems;

REQUEST the AUC, with the support of ECA and other partners, to strengthen and build civil registration and identity management systems that are aligned with international standards and reflecting the specific circumstances and unique social and cultural context of the African continent; and

REQUEST AUC and ECA to conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the adopted recommendations.