

**Draft Press Release 148/2019****The 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration calls for improving the civil registration and vital statistics and identity management system in Africa**

**Lusaka- Zambia, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019:** The Senior Official Session of the Fifth Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, commenced under the theme of “Innovative Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Foundation for Legal Identity Management”, today 14<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019, at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre, Lusaka, Zambia.

The three-day Meeting will review Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System (CRVS) and digital identity management systems in AU Member States and discuss new and emerging initiatives such as the digital identity initiative in Africa and the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, both of which rely on a well-functioning and efficient CRVS and identity management systems.

Speaking at the Opening Session, H.E. Prof. Victor Harrison, AUC Commissioner for Economic Affairs stressed the importance of Civil Registration data for a functional and people-centred integration process that aims to allowing citizen to benefit from their fundamental right, improve their wee-being, promote job creation, and market expansion through trade, free movement of people and labour mobility. At the continental level, the he underscored that digital transformation was positioned among the top priorities of African Union Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda of SDGs. He encouraged AU Member States to register all births, marriages and other vital events on their territory without discrimination and irrespective of the legal status of the individuals concerned (including refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, as well as those at risk of statelessness, and migrants. (Full speech of the Commissioner available on: [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) )

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Zambia, Dr. Liya Mutale underlined that the development and strengthening of CRVS systems were important for improving the quality of a country’s vital statistics and for generating information for evidence-based policy-making. She highlighted the efforts of the Government of Zambia for the implementation of the Integrated National Registration System, through the collection of biometric data and issuance of birth certificates and electronic identity cards, as legal documents. In order to have a linkage between civil registration and legal

identity management, she voiced the need to ensure that both systems were well developed. In conclusion, she talked about the importance of CR and digital identity systems as crucial components for achieving Agenda 2063, the SDGs and the National Development Plan targets.

In his remarks, Mr. Charles L. Lufumpa, Acting Chief Economist and Vice President of African Development Bank (AfDB) underscored that the Bank had been playing a critical role in implementing the APAI-CRVS program, which was a key part of its overall statistical capacity-building program for African countries. Noting the progress made over the past decade for the improvement of CRVS on the continent he highlighted some challenges and commended efforts by all stakeholders to create awareness and knowledge about the importance CRVS and secure national identity systems for socio-economic policy making. He stressed the need for scaling up efforts towards modernizing and digitalizing CRVS systems across Africa.

On his opening remarks, Mr. Oliver Chinganya, Director of the African Centre for Statistics at United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) noted that civil registration was the foundation of legal identity - a universal requirement for SDG16.9 to “*provide legal identity for all, including birth registration*”. He highlighted the significant progress registered on the implementation of the APAI-CRVS Programme including: (i) the operationalization of the resolutions of the Nouakchott Declaration; (ii) improved staffing levels of the ECA Secretariat and; (iii) the continental strengthened commitment to conducting comprehensive assessment of CRVS systems in Member States.

The Fifth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration is organized by the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission in collaboration with the UNECA, the AfDB and the Government of Republic of Zambia.

The main objective of the Conference is to provide strategic and policy guidance on pathways towards holistic, innovative and integrated CVRS and digital identity management systems, in order to close the identity gap in Africa and thus contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2063, which echoes inclusiveness as a prerequisite to the continent growth and development and the target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Senior Official will conclude their meeting on 16 October, and will present their report and recommendations for the Ministerial Meeting scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

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