

**Directorate of Information and Communication****Press Release****African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration discuss innovative and integrated digital identity management systems in Africa**

**Lusaka, Zambia 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019:** African Union Ministers responsible for Civil Registration converged in Lusaka, Zambia, for the Ministerial Session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference, which kicked off today 17<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019, under the theme “**Innovative Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) System: Foundation for Legal Identity Management**”.

Addressing the Session on behalf of the AUC Chairperson, **H.E. Mr. Quartey Thomas Kwesi, AUC Deputy Chairperson (DCP)** stated that the theme of the Conference contributes to the implementation of major continental initiatives including the Agenda 2063, African continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Protocol on Free Movement of People, the African Passport and the Single African Air Transport market as all of which require legal identity and data management.

Recalling that several legal instruments and protocols of the AU call for the promotion and strengthening of CRVS systems, the DCP emphasized that civil registration remains at the center of development and good governance.. He noted that in spite of the progress made, many countries in Africa, still do not have integrated and well-functioning CRVS systems that capture all vital events taking place in their countries including the registration of the migrants. To this end, he called upon all Member States to show commitment towards the development of CRVS system in Africa and allocate adequate resources to CRVS in line with the principles of the African Charter on Statistics

The DCP added that the AU Assembly in July 2016 declared 2017-2026 as the decade for repositioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Africa. He underscored that the AUC and its partners should continue supporting Member States to improve CRVS system under the framework of the revised Strategy for Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA2), which was adopted by Heads of State and Government in 2018. He

expressed a firm commitment to work closely with AfDB, ECA and ACBF to make the African statistical system efficient to generate quality statistics. including Civil Registration and Vital Statistics to monitor progress towards the attainment of the Agenda 2063. (The full speech of the DCP on [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) )

**H.E. Inonge Wina, Vice President of the Republic of Zambia** in her key note address emphasized the importance of working together with greater determination in the spirit of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance to change the civil registration landscape for the good of posterity.

The Vice President stressed that “Success in civil registration and vital statistics as a foundation for legal identity will be guaranteed in Africa if Member States improve the capacity of civil registration authorities to effectively deliver registration services to the population”. (The full speech of the Vice President on [www.au.int](http://www.au.int) )

**Dr. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa**, in her video message to the conference stated that Legal identity is established through the civil registration of a birth, a process in which the government records important biographic information about the occurrence and characteristics of birth and persons experiencing the event said

She noted that undocumented persons who are often women, children, refugees and migrants face critical challenges in exercising basic human rights in the society and seeking protection by the law, a situation that only worsens their vulnerability. She said “Africa, which is home to 1.3 billion people, is faced with a critical legal identity gap, whereby many exist without being known to their governments and without any means to prove who they are.

The Conference opened in presence of H.E. Inonge Wina, Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, H.E. Quartey Thomas Kwesi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Charles Lufumpa, Acting Chief Economist and Vice President of the AfDB, Mr Oliver Chinganya Director of the African Centre for Statistics, UNECA, African Ministers responsible for civil registration, national identity registration, health, ICT and e-governance, heads of civil registration offices, heads of national identity registrations, heads of national statistics offices, representatives of regional and international organizations including the UN agencies, and representatives of selected non-governmental organizations.

Over two-days, the Ministers will deliberate on charting a strategic and policy guidance on pathways towards holistic, innovative and integrated CVRS and digital identity management systems in Africa.

In particular the Conference will address a number of issues including; civil registration as the foundation for legal identity systems, Interim Committee of Registrars General, Initiative at Members States level, and launch of Compendium of good practices on the integration of CRVS and identity systems, importance of CRVS and ID management for durable solutions for refugees, IDPs and returnees, and Integrating of CRVS, legal identity management and other systems in the digital era. The Ministers will also consider the draft conclusions and recommendations from the Senior Official Meeting, and adopt the Ministerial Report and Declaration

The Fifth Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration is organized by the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, and Government of Republic of Zambia who took over the Chairmanship of the 5<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers Responsible for CRVS from the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

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