STATEMENT BY

H.E. Mr. QUARTEY THOMAS KWESI
DEPUTY CHAIR PERSON
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

AT THE
FIFTH CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE
FOR CIVIL REGISTRATION

17 OCTOBER 2019
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA
Excellencies, African Ministers in Charge of Civil Registration;
Excellencies, African Ministers of Health;
Excellencies, Ministers responsible for ID management,
Excellencies, Ministers responsible for ICT
Excellencies, Ministers responsible for E-Governance

Executive Secretary of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

President of African Development bank

Members of Government;

Representatives of Development Partners;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am delighted to address the Fifth Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration taking place in this beautiful city of Lusaka, Zambia. On behalf of the African Union Commission and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to welcome you all to this Conference. I wish also to thank you sincerely for sparing your busy schedules to attend this Conference, which is a clear manifestation of your commitment to the development and the improvement of civil registration in Africa.

Please allow me also to thank H.E. Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, the Government and the People of Zambia for their usual warm welcome and hospitality accorded to all the delegations.
Excellency’s
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

The holding of this conference is in line with the Decision of African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government held in July 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia that has endorsed the institutionalization of a biennial meeting of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration to be a platform for discussion, monitoring and evaluation of political commitments and policy related to Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Africa.

In adopting Agenda 2063, African Member States committed to eradicating poverty in a generation, catalyzing education, promoting science and technology, fast-tracking the establishment of AfCFTA, strengthening domestic resource mobilization, and introducing an African passport. An important foundation for realizing these objectives is establishing legal identities for African people.

The theme of this conference “Innovative Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System: Foundation for Legal Identity Management”. is timely as ensuring legal identity will contribute to the implementation of major continental initiatives including the African continental Free trade Area, the Protocol on Free Movement of People, the African Passport and the Single African Air Transport market.

The realization of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development requires that every vital event is registered and relevant statistics are collected, compiled, produced and disseminated in a regular and continuous manner to guide policy and
planning, to inform decisions, enable all stakeholders to track progress and make the necessary adjustments to ensure transparency and mutual accountability.

That is the reason why both the continental and global agendas recognize the importance of CRVS systems and gave a reference to CRVS.

Efficient civil registration systems in Africa contribute towards improved systems of governance (this includes economic, political and social perspectives to governance), improved capacity for individuals to claim their human and civil rights, better ability for governments to effect service delivery, and also better capacities in the monitoring of all human development efforts. This makes investments into the CRVS agenda not timely, but a strategic move for the continent.

**Excellencies**
**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

Several legal instruments and protocols of the AU call 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 statisticians.
The AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa recommends to implement sound civil registry systems, including birth registration, identity documents and travel documents as part of migration governance.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights also requested member States to take the necessary measures to strengthen their civil registration services to ensure the prompt registration of all births in their territory, without discrimination.

In Africa, the right to birth registration is recognized by article 6 of African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa -Kampala Convention- (Article 13); Aspiration 3 of the Africa’s Agenda for Children 2040 and in broad terms by AU Agenda 2063, aspiration 6.

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Today bearing a significant higher share of the responsibility of supporting the forcibly displaced than other regions in the world. The Continent host one third of the world’s 70 million forcibly displaced persons with 8 million Refugees and 16 million Internally Displaced Persons.

This therefore means that if not well registered, documented and managed, we could ran the risk of these people becoming stateless which has far reaching social-cultural, economic and political impact.
on Africa’s integration, development, political, peace, and security implications.

May I also state that, lack of proper registration management can result in exclusion, discrimination and power imbalances which are the root causes to conflicts and displacements in Africa. This therefore means that civil registration remains at the center of development and good governance which in itself is a preventive measure as well as a durable solution to forced displacement in Africa.

Conclusively, Africa cannot ignore, falter or relent in improving our civil registration and identity management mechanisms at the national level. This will require appropriate legal and policy frameworks to be established as well as requisite resources to enhance its wide implementation on the continent.

To this end, we call 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.

Excellencies
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

There are substantive connections between national identity management and civil registration systems. Civil registration system should serve as the basis for individual identification and for the recording of ‘entry into’ and ‘exit from’ the population registers.
Strengthening and facilitating greater coordination between national identity authorities and civil registration authorities and other stakeholders including services in charge of nationality issues is important in managing identity and to ensure effective registration of vital events and timely, quality, accurate and reliable population data for decision making.

In spite of the progress made, many countries in Africa, still do not have CRVS systems that capture all vital events taking place in the country. In addition to this, civil registration and national ID systems are at different levels of development and are loosely linked or not linked at all hampering progress on ensuring a legal identity for all.

Lack of policy or laws linking civil registration and national ID systems and absence of coordination mechanism between national identity and civil registration and other government entities is a challenge. The lack of centralized government oversight and ownership over ID management systems is also a concern.

To address these challenges, the third Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration held in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire in 2015, requested the establishment of solid linkages between civil registration and national identity systems in efforts to manage one’s legal identity and to improve governance and service delivery. The Nouakchott Declaration also encouraged member States to create a unified system for civil registration and national identification operations.
African Union member States were further encouraged to develop shared information and communication technology assets in support of effective civil registration and vital statistics systems for the continent, which are built to common standards and are interoperable with other governmental systems, such as health and identity management.

To this end, we call upon all countries to take ownership over their ID management System and establish linkages with civil registration system.

**Excellencies  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The African Union Assembly in July 2016 declared 2017-2026 as the decade for repositioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in Africa as continental, regional and national development agenda and urges governments to respond with appropriate action.

And to implement the decade, we all must join hands and work together and we call upon the support of all of you gathered here to realize that. The AUC and its partners will continue to support AU Member States to improve civil registration and vital statistics system under the framework of the revised Strategy for Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA2).

In addition, the African Union Commission through the revised Strategy for Harmonization of Stats in Africa (SHaSA 2) adopted in 2018 by the AU Heads of State and Government, expresses its firm will to contribute actively to the Pan-African sister organizations-
AfDB, ECA and ACBF—to make the African statistical system efficient and able to generate reliable, harmonized, timely statistical information covering all dimensions of development and integration political, social, environmental and cultural issues in Africa including Civil Registration and Vital Statistics.

I would also like to inform the audience that the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is also playing an important role in supporting the CRVS initiative in Africa.

Early this year, Africa CDC launched a Mortality Surveillance Programme which is an African response to the lack of accurate and timely mortality data to inform health decisions. Leveraging and building on existing frameworks, systems and networks, the Programme has the potential to rapidly advance efforts in mortality surveillance, offering new levels of support directly to Member States. The Programme seeks to build capacity across the continent and is rapidly making progress.

The Programme has four key pillars:

1. Programme oversight and technical assistance
2. Data Access and analysis
3. Monitoring, policy and evaluation
4. Resource mobilisation, management and distribution

Complementing and integrating with wider CRVS goals, Africa CDC’s Mortality Surveillance Programme offers each Member State a platform and tools to advance efforts to capture and use mortality data to better inform health decisions and improve health outcomes.
for entire populations. I welcome this new innovation and thank Africa CDC team for their work and encourage each of you to learn more about and support their work.

The deliberations taking place today and tomorrow will go a long way in supporting efforts towards improved understanding of the centrality of civil registration and vital statistics and management of legal identity in the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. It is my sincere hope that we will leave Lusaka having reached consensus on these important issues.

Finally, please allow me, once again, to thank H.E. Mr. Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, the Government and the People of Zambia for their warm welcome and hospitality. Permit me also to thank each and every one of you for making it to Lusaka.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish this 5th Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration fruitful deliberations and great success.