United Nations	African Union
Economic Commission for Africa	**African Union Commission**

CRMC/6/EXP/2022/L.1
Distr.: General
24 October 2022

Original: English

Conference of African Ministers
Responsible for Civil Registration
Sixth session
Expert segment

Addis Ababa, 24–28 October 2022
Item 15 of the provisional agenda for the expert segment[*]
Discussion and endorsement of the draft conclusions and recommendations

<div align="center">

Draft report on the expert segment

</div>

I.   Introduction

1.   The expert segment of the sixth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, from 24 to 27 October 2022 under the theme "A decade into the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems: reflecting on progress and accelerating efforts towards 2030 through transformed systems". The meeting was jointly organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, with support from other members of the regional core group on civil registration and vital statistics.

II.   Attendance

A.   African States

2.   The meeting was attended by representatives of the following African States: Angola; Benin; Botswana; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Cabo Verde; Cameroon; Central African Republic; Chad; Comoros; Congo; Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Djibouti; Egypt; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Eswatini; Ethiopia; Gambia; Ghana; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Kenya; Lesotho; Liberia; Libya; Madagascar; Malawi; Mali; Mauritania; Mauritius; Morocco; Mozambique; Namibia; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; Sao Tome and Principe; Senegal; Sierra Leone; Somalia; South Africa; South Sudan; Sudan; Togo; Tunisia; Uganda; United Republic of Tanzania; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

---

[*] CRMC/6/EXP/2022/1.

B. Observers

3.   The meeting was attended by observers from the following international, regional, subregional and national organizations and institutions:

(a)   International, regional and subregional organizations and institutions: Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention; African Development Bank; African Union Commission; Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative; and Global Financing Facility;

(b)   Agencies of the United Nations system: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); United Nations Statistics Division; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and World Health Organization (WHO);

(c)   Others: international statistics consultants and other prominent persons.

III.   Opening of the expert segment [agenda item 1]

4.   Prior to the start of the expert segment of the sixth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, a series of opening statements were delivered within the context of the joint opening of the expert segment, the eighth meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa, and the eighth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa.

5.   The joint meeting was officially opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ato Demeke Mekonen, who warmly welcomed all the participants to Addis Ababa. He emphasized in his address that African Governments could play a crucial role in updating and enhancing national civil registration and vital statistics systems, and should therefore earmark sufficient and sustainable budgetary resources to that end.

6.   Welcoming remarks were then given within the context of the joint meeting by the Minister of ICT and National Guidance of the Republic of Uganda, Chris Baryomunsi, who commended the African Centre for Statistics at ECA for organizing the joint meeting. He stressed the importance of civil registration systems as the best sources of information for the compilation of vital statistics and underscored the need to address the challenge of providing what he dubbed "the right data to the right people in the right format at the right time and at the right cost".

7.   The Director of the African Centre of Statistics at ECA, Oliver Chinganya, noted that the joint meeting was being held at an important time, as the continent was celebrating 10 years of success in implementing the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems. The Programme has achieved a number of significant goals: it had, inter alia, successfully raised the profile of civil registration and vital statistics systems on the continent, including among leaders at the highest level, and had facilitated technical skills training and capacity-building for those responsible for civil registration and vital statistics in Africa, thereby strengthening their capacity to perform their duties.

8.   The Acting Director, Gender, Poverty and Social Policy Division at ECA, Edlam Abera Yemeru, then addressed the participants at the joint meeting, underscoring in her speech that it was important to consider ways to modernize and transform national civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa so as to ensure the availability of the data needed to promote subregional and regional integration and the global development agenda.

9.   Participants at the expert segment, the eighth meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa, and the eighth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa then moved to their respective conference rooms.

10.   An opening address was delivered to those attending the expert segment on behalf of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Zambia, the outgoing Chair of the segment, by Peter Moyo, who highlighted the milestones that had been reached in the area of civil registration and vital statistics. He also drew attention to the disruptions to civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa that had been caused by the global response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and emphasized that African countries must now take action to rebuild and increase the resilience of their civil registration systems. He encouraged the meeting to reflect on the progress that had been achieved by African countries in the area of civil registration and vital statistics over the previous decade, and to identify priority actions and strategies that could advance progress still further in that area before the 2030 deadline for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

11.   A keynote statement was given to the expert segment by the Chief of the Demography and Social Statistics Section, African Centre for Statistics, William Muhwava, on behalf of the Director of the African Centre for Statistics, Oliver Chinganya. Mr. Muhwava welcomed all participants to the meeting and thanked all development partners for their support. He noted that the meeting would provide a crucial opportunity to reflect on progress made and to identify priority actions that would help accelerate the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems over the next 10 years.

12.   A keynote address was then delivered by the Director of Child Protection, Programme Division, UNICEF, Cornelius Williams, who highlighted the major achievements of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems. He commended those African countries that had attained universal birth registration, including Algeria and Tunisia, and drew attention to areas in which further efforts were needed, including in birth registration in certain countries with large populations, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Nigeria, death registration, marriage and divorce registration, and the annual production of vital statistics. He urged countries to give priority to addressing backlogs that had arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic so as to ensure that none of the progress achieved during the last decade was reversed. Recognizing that a number of African countries had an opportunity to further improve their civil registration and vital statistics systems, such as by ensuring the registration of all births that occurred in health facilities, he called for a "one-stop-shop" process for birth registration and the timely registration of all vital events so as to ensure the generation of up-to-date vital statistics.

IV. Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work [agenda item 2]

13.   The following countries were unanimously elected by the Committee to form the new Bureau:

Chair:	Ethiopia — Eastern Africa
First Vice-Chair:	Cameroon — Central Africa
Second Vice-Chair:	Senegal — West Africa
Third Vice-Chair:	Morocco — North Africa
Rapporteur:	Botswana — Southern Africa

14.   Following an acceptance statement by the newly elected Chair, the group of experts adopted the following agenda, based on the provisional agenda that had been circulated:

1.   Opening of the expert segment.

2.   Election of the Bureau and adoption of the agenda and programme of work.

3.   Panel discussion: Ten years after the establishment of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems and eight years to 2030 – Are we on track to realizing our civil registration and vital statistics commitments?

4.   Statutory issues.

5.   Assessing progress in the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the region: How can Africa accelerate progress in meeting regional and international commitments?

6.   Civil registration in humanitarian contexts: Building on experience gained during the coronavirus disease pandemic.

7.   Role of the health sector in building civil registration and vital statistics systems and the benefits of those systems for the health agenda.

8.   Parallel sessions:

        (a)   Session I: Digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems;

        (b)   Session II: Leadership, budget advocacy and sustainability in civil registration and vital statistics systems;

        (c)   Session III: Legislation as an enabler of efficient civil registration and vital statistics systems;

        (d)   Session IV: Building integrated civil registration and vital statistics and

digital identity systems.

9. Assessing progress in the production of civil registration-based vital statistics on the continent.

10. Population registers and the opportunities they offer for improved public administration and statistics.

11. Panel discussion: Digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa to optimize their efficiency and use.

12. Panel discussion: Legal identity for migrants, refugees and marginalized population groups.

13. Regional strategy and action plan for civil registration and vital statistics and achieving the commitments of the 2030 Agenda.

14. Subcommittee on Civil Registration.

15. Discussion and endorsement of the draft conclusions and recommendations.

16. Other matters.

17. Closing of the expert segment.

V. Ten years after the establishment of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems and eight years to 2030 – Are we on track to realizing our civil registration and vital statistics commitments? [agenda item 3]

A. Presentation

15. Under this agenda item, a representative of the secretariat presented a report on progress achieved within the context of the Africa Programme and outlined areas where further efforts would be needed.

B. Discussion

16. In the ensuing discussion, experts from Côte d'Ivoire, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United Nations Statistics Division, WHO and UNICEF identified a number of key achievements and challenges relevant to civil registration and vital statistics systems development in Africa. The experts underlined that the progress achieved to date in the development of those systems fell short of what was required if Africa was to achieve its goal of universal legal identity by 2030. African countries must redouble their efforts in that area if they are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by the 2030 deadline.

### C.	Recommendations

17.	In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that African States should:

(a)	Renew their commitment, expressed at previous sessions of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, to increase the financial resources they made available in support of national civil registration and vital statistics systems;

(b)	Strengthen their legal and policy frameworks with a view to eliminating discriminatory provisions and providing free registration and certification services;

(c)	Adopt a one-stop-shop approach for birth registration and certification that is interoperable with health and immunization systems, including in humanitarian assistance contexts;

(d)	Adopt and strengthen a holistic and interoperable approach to civil registration, the generation of vital statistics and identity management for all vital events from birth to death, in line with United Nations Legal Identity Agenda recommendations;

(e)	Strengthen capacity at the subnational level, including in the analysis and use of civil registration and vital statistics data, carry out regular monitoring and training activities, and strengthen the coordination and harmonization of approaches adopted by different governmental entities in the area of civil registration and vital statistics;

(f)	Strengthen the capacity of national authorities in the area of death registration and the recording causes of death, and, for all institutional deaths, ensure that the cause of death is coded correctly and an appropriate medical certificate is issued. If no medical doctor is available to determine the cause of death, a verbal autopsy should be carried out.

(g)	Promote the use of homegrown and tested innovative good practices and encourage the adoption of those practices by relevant authorities in other Member States.

## VI.	Statutory issues [agenda item 4]

### A.	Presentation

18.	The secretariat of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems and the African Union Commission gave a presentation on statutory issues relating to the mandate of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. A representative of ECA reviewed the status of implementation of the resolutions adopted at the fifth session of the Conference. In total, 42 per cent of the recommendations had been fully implemented, 38 per cent had been partially implemented, and 20 per cent remained unimplemented. A representative of the African Union Commission then reviewed progress achieved in the context of the "No name" campaign, including the production of communication and advocacy materials and the development of the continental birth registration strategy. A representative of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention then gave a presentation on continental mortality surveillance, highlighting the steps being taken to develop a continental mortality surveillance framework, its intended purpose and benefits, and how that framework would align with policies and regulations in force.

B. Discussion

19.   Participants discussed further the issues raised in the presentation and shared their experiences in that regard. In particular, they discussed how the continental mortality surveillance framework could be aligned with existing mortality data collection initiatives.

C. Recommendations

20.   In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that African States should:

(a)   Establish mechanisms for sharing information between the health sector and civil registration and vital statistics systems;

(b)   Ensure the adoption of the continental framework for mortality surveillance, align that framework with existing national policies and instruments in that area, and ensure that those policies and instruments were adequately funded so that they functioned effectively.

VII. Assessing progress in the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the region: How can Africa accelerate progress in meeting regional and international commitments? [agenda item 5]

A. Birth registration

1. Presentation

21.   A representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported on the status of birth registration in Africa and underlined that, if Africa continued to accelerate progress in the coming years, it would be able to reduce the number of unregistered children from 91 million to 58 million by 2030. Country presentations highlighting progress on birth registration were made by experts from Angola, Chad and Namibia. The experts noted that there had been a rise in birth registration levels over the past two decades in some African countries. However, progress had been uneven and additional investment was needed to achieve universality.

2. Discussion

22.   The experts took note of practices and strategies that had led to accelerated progress in birth registration, such as the decentralization of registration processes and systems, including through the creation of interoperability with health systems, and political commitment from Heads of State and Government and other high-level officials. They underlined the need to focus on improving the registration of births occurring at home (outside health facilities) and acknowledged the importance of analysing registration data to identify barriers to birth and death registration and inform improvement strategies and interventions.

3. Recommendations

23.   In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that African States should:

(a)   Prioritize investment in civil registration, including enabling digitalization and decentralization, which are game-changers in addressing distance and access barriers;

(b)   Establish and/or strengthen multisectoral collaboration mechanisms with all relevant stakeholders, especially those in the health sector.

B.   Death registration and recording causes of death

1.   Presentation

24.   A representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) delivered a presentation on the status of death registration and the collection of cause-of-death information in Africa. The delegates from Burundi and Kenya explained how they had managed to increase death registration by ensuring that every death that occurred in a health facility was recorded, using community informants for deaths that occurred at home and requiring that a burial order be obtained before interment for every death.

2.   Discussion

25.   The experts highlighted the unavailability of high-quality, disaggregated data on death and causes of death as a major challenge on the continent and underscored major challenges that contributed to underperformance in the registration of deaths, including a shortage of skilled workers and the limited adoption of international data standards. Some best practices identified to ensure progress included reviewing and updating legal frameworks, enhancing the central role of health ministries in the management of civil registration and vital statistics systems, improving the efficiency of civil registration and vital statistics business processes, and developing civil registration and vital statistics strategic plans and standard operating procedures for the registration of death and causes of death.

3.   Recommendations

26.   In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that African States should:

(a)   Engage in awareness-raising and other communication activities on the importance of the registration of death and causes of death at the national, regional and community levels and with different stakeholders;

(b)   Review and update legal frameworks to improve both death and birth registration and the production of other vital statistics;

(c)   Leverage innovations in digital technology, including those related to the harmonization and integration of systems, to build automated and efficient civil registration and vital statistics processes;

(d)   Strengthen capacity in data analysis and the regular production of vital statistics reports;

(e)   Improve coordination among institutions concerned with the collection of information on death, especially ministries of health.

C. Marriage and divorce registration

1. Presentation

27. A representative of UNFPA provided an update on the status of the registration and certification of marriages and divorces on the continent. Country presentations relating to progress in this area were made by experts from the Congo, Seychelles and South Africa. They highlighted the lack of data available for the assessment of the comprehensiveness of marriage and divorce registration on the continent and, where available, the low and high variability of registration levels.

2. Discussion

28. During the discussion, the importance of marriage and divorce registration was noted and it was pointed out that this area of work was, in general, neglected. Experts observed that there was a need for a continuous assessment of the quality and coverage of registration data and for the regular generation of vital statistics from marriage and divorce registration records, even in countries that continued to have low registration coverage.

3. Recommendations

29. In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that African States should:

(a) Conduct further research on the supply and demand factors influencing marriage and divorce registration;

(b) Advocate the harmonization of marriage laws to support marriage and divorce registration using a life cycle approach.

VIII. Assessing progress in the production of civil registration-based vital statistics on the continent [agenda item 9]

A. Presentation

30. A representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) presented a report on the progress made in the production of vital statistics in Africa, highlighting major achievements, challenges faced by countries and resources available to support countries. He highlighted the importance of increased advocacy to encourage the production of vital statistics reports by all countries and noted that the production of vital statistics was a good step towards raising the awareness of Governments about the status of vital events registration systems, which provided crucial data for planning and policymaking.

B. Discussion

31. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion involving delegates from Madagascar, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The panellists shared best practices that they had adopted at the national level to facilitate the production of vital statistics from civil registration data, as well as the main challenges that they faced. The establishment of strong coordination and communication mechanisms was underlined as a critical strategy for progress.

C. Recommendations

32.   In the light of the discussion, the experts made the following recommendations:

1.   UNFPA and other partners should:

(a)   Develop guidelines (harmonized tools) on the production of statistics from civil registration and vital statistics systems and the integration of civil registration and vital statistics into national statistical systems to ensure sustainable funding;

(b)   Adapt existing global guidelines to the African context, both at the national and decentralized levels.

2.   WHO, in collaboration with ECA, UNFPA and other stakeholders, should strengthen the capacity of countries to produce vital statistics, including on causes of death.

IX. Population registers and the opportunities they offer for improved public administration and statistics [agenda item 10]

A.   Presentation

33.   A representative of ECA delivered a presentation on the importance of population registers, their uses (administrative and statistical), requirements for their creation, including the recommendation contained in decision 53/107 of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations on the use of the census to build national statistical population registers, and the status of their implementation across the continent. A representative of UNFPA delivered a presentation on the potential uses of population registers for statistical production, demonstrating their important advantages compared with other data sources. The representative of Kenya presented legal and policy considerations for the establishment of an administrative population register, and the representative of South Africa showcased national progress in the development of an administrative population register and its use for statistical purposes.

B.   Discussion

34.   The presentations were followed by a discussion on the need for African countries to establish national population registers that contained up-to-date information on their residents. Such registers were typically maintained in line with a legal registration requirement for both nationals and foreigners residing in the country.

C.   Recommendations

35.   In the light of the discussion, the experts made the following recommendations:

1.   Countries should take note of the new guidance issued by the United Nations on the establishment of population registers.

2.   African States that had sound civil registration and vital statistics systems were encouraged to explore the development of registers and their use for statistical production and to take note of the many advantages of such registers when compared with traditional census methods.

X. Role of the health sector in building civil registration and vital statistics systems and the benefits of those systems for the health agenda [agenda item 7]

A. Presentation

36.   The panel comprised representatives from Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal and the United Republic of Tanzania. The panel discussion was moderated by an official from the World Bank. Panel members emphasized the role that health facilities played in the registration of births and deaths and importance of data gathered from civil registration and vital statistics in measuring and improving the efficiency of the health system. Countries shared ongoing efforts to engage the health sector in the collection of statistics on births, deaths and causes of death at the national and subnational levels.

B. Discussion

37.   It was noted that countries were establishing civil registration and vital statistics registration centres in their health facilities to ensure the integration of services and that all information on births, deaths and causes of death was adequately captured. Some countries were developing modules on the importance and the process of capturing vital events, which would be integrated into the curricula of medical institutions. Some of the challenges faced by countries in engaging the health sector in the administration of civil registration and vital statistics systems were: (a) a lack of financial and human resources; (b) the shifting of tasks of medical professionals; (c) backlogs; (d) the need to standardize data collection templates; and (e) the lack of infrastructure.

C. Recommendations

38.   In the light of the discussion, the experts made the following recommendations:

(a)   African States should:

(i)   Improve the interoperability of the health system and the civil registration system by setting up a mechanism at the national and subnational levels to strengthen collaboration among all stakeholders;

(ii)   Operationalize verbal autopsy at the community level through close collaboration with health facilities and community health structures;

(b)   ECA and the African Union Commission should: compile all the resolutions adopted at past conferences and inform African States of progress made, what remains to be done and the bottlenecks to realizing these commitments.

XI. Parallel sessions [agenda item 8]

A. Session I: Digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems

1. Presentation

39. Representatives from ECA and Vital Strategies presented a report on best practice guidelines for digital civil registration and vital statistics systems. This was followed by a presentation by a representative of UNICEF on safe, innovative and cost-effective digitalization practices and presentations by delegates from Benin, Liberia and Rwanda on the experiences of their countries in digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics systems. Participants discussed the essential features of information technology solutions, the advantages and disadvantages of various software services and licensing, hosting and procurement options, including custom-developed software, off-the-shelf commercial software and open-source software.

2. Discussion

40. Participants urged countries to put in place adequate business processes and to follow well-defined principles and best practices, as provided in existing United Nations and other guidelines. Countries should take advantage of health information systems software, such as the District Health Information Software, where such technology was in place.

3. Recommendations

41. In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that African States should:

(a) Actively pursue the digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems to harness their full potential for the benefit of all government bodies and services, with a view to enhancing registration coverage and outreach, while strengthening the safety and security of data-sharing practices and interoperability between systems;

(b) Take into consideration key legal and regulatory frameworks and the information technology systems and infrastructure in place at the national level in their efforts to modernize and digitalize civil registration and vital statistics systems. In so doing, data safety and security, system integrity, clarity of ownership and data availability should be accorded central priority;

(c) Take into consideration the technical and resource capabilities on the ground when planning, procuring and implementing digital technologies. Most important, the process should develop the technical capacity of key personnel to understand, manage and sustain the use of the systems over the long term, thereby avoiding extensive reliance on solution providers and potential vendor lock-in. Partners should continue to provide relevant support in that regard.

B.   **Session II: Leadership, budget advocacy and sustainability in civil registration and vital statistics systems**

1.   Presentation

42.   The session was moderated by a delegate from Ghana, and presentations were given by delegates from Cameroon, the Niger and Uganda. A representative of Vital Strategies gave a presentation on the development partners to provide opportunities to learn from examples of best practices in leadership and budgeting for civil registration and vital statistics. Partners showed a video containing examples of the best practices in leadership of one country.

2.   Discussion

43.   During the follow-up discussion, it was noted that mechanisms for internal resource mapping and mobilization strategies were insufficient in many countries. Emphasis was placed on garnering political support and leadership to ensure adequate domestic financing to sustain efforts to improve civil registration and vital statistics. Champions needed to promote the value of those systems in governance. Many African countries depended on external, project-based donor funding, which could stagnate and lead to the collapse of projects in the absence of sustainable funding. They applauded the effort by such countries as the Niger to mobilize internal resources and integrate budgets at the subnational level. Countries should build on strong inter-agency collaboration and coordination in developing costed joint strategic plans and ensuring multi-stakeholder budget advocacy activities aimed at mobilizing strong political support and domestic financing for the systems, including among private partners.

3.   Recommendations

44.   In the light of the discussion, the experts made the following recommendations:

(a)   African States should:

(i)   Carry out resource mapping and develop strategies for sustainable financing;

(ii)   Identify and engage high-level officials to champion civil registration and vital statistics initiatives.

(b)   Development partners should:

(i)   Harmonize support for countries and ensure the sustainability of all their initiatives;

(ii)   Ensure that all programmes to improve civil registration and vital statistics be incorporated into a joint strategic plan.

C. Session III: Legislation as an enabler of efficient civil registration and vital statistics systems

1. Presentation

45.   The representative of the Statistics Division of the United Nations presented guidelines for a legislative framework for civil registration, vital statistics and identity management. He stressed the principle of providing legal identity to all and the need for a legal framework in which collaboration among stakeholders was considered. He recalled the central role of the civil registration system in the identity management system. Delegates from Guinea, Senegal and South Sudan shared their experiences, challenges and prospects for improving their legal frameworks for civil registration. The participants agreed that the laws governing civil registration were outdated in most countries and needed to be revised.

2. Discussion

46.   Participants indicated that, despite the willingness of some countries to revise their legal frameworks, they were sometimes confronted with sociocultural and religious constraints. All institutional and community actors should be involved in the process of revising the legal frameworks to avoid difficulties in their implementation.

3. Recommendations

47.   In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that countries should:

        (a)   Review their legal frameworks for civil registration to promote the digitalization of the civil registration system and collaboration among key stakeholders, as recommended in the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, to allow for the systematic registration and securing of civil registration data;

        (b)   Integrate elements of sustainable financing into their legal frameworks for civil registration and national statistical systems.

D. Session IV: Building integrated civil registration and vital statistics and digital identity systems

1. Presentation

48.   Delegates from Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Tunisia shared their experiences the establishment of integrated civil registration and vital statistics and identity management systems, which provided a unique and trustworthy source of identity of persons within a country. Critical requirements for building such systems included setting up adequate coordination frameworks, ensuring access to adequate information technology, developing relevant legislation and policies, addressing concerns about data confidentiality and protection and developing adequate and efficient business processes.

2. Discussion

49.   Delegates emphasized the importance of legal reforms to ensure the harmonization of laws and remove any duplication of civil registration functions. There was a need to legally formalize the use of technology and access to information mechanisms and to address data

protection and privacy concerns. Delegates underscored the importance of integrating such systems in order to verify and automatically share information across systems.

3. Recommendations

50.   In the light of the discussion, the experts made the following recommendations:

(a)   African States should:

(i)   Automate civil registration and vital statistics systems to facilitate the collection, registration, transmission and analysis of data on vital events and establish links between systems, guided by appropriate legislation;

(ii)   Establish online and offline systems to address Internet access challenges, in particular in rural and remote areas and areas with marginalized communities.

(b)   ECA and the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda Task Force should fully support countries that have begun to implement the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda and should consider providing support to other interested countries;

(c)   ECA, the African Union and partners should support countries in the mobilization of resources from partners involved in civil registration and vital statistics and identity management.

XII. Panel discussion: Digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa to optimize their efficiency and use [agenda item 11]

A. Presentation

51.   Countries, representatives of the secretariat and members of the regional core group on civil registration and vital statistics gave presentations on the status of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa and best practices in digitalizing such systems. A delegate from Rwanda gave a presentation on the development of a homegrown, end-to-end digitalized system.

B. Discussion

52.   Participants highlighted the key requirements for digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics systems, including having adequate frameworks for coordination and sufficient access to information technology, developing relevant legislation and policies, addressing concerns about data confidentiality and protection. However, unlike other national identification systems, the fact that civil registration and vital statistics systems were not a priority in national budgets posed an obstacle to digitalizing those systems.

C.   Recommendations

53.   In the light of the discussion, the experts recommended that countries:

(a)   Follow well-developed business processes in digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics systems;

(b)   Explore the possibility of using the District Health Information Software to support efforts to digitalize the civil registration and vital statistics system.

_____