

Experts urged to provide “practical recommendations” to improve civil registration systems in Africa

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Addis Ababa, 11 August 2010 (ECA) - Experts attending a preparatory meeting on improving civil registration and vital statistics from 10-12 August have been urged to come up with "practical recommendations" that will enable policy-makers to make evidence-based decisions in aid of Africa's development. The call was made by Ethiopia's Minister of Justice Mr. Berhan Hailu during the opening session held 10 August, 2010 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa.

Minister Ahmed ShideBerhan Hailu elaborated on the growing importance of improving National Statistical Systems and said they provide basic data inputs that are indispensable for making rational decisions. "Such systems contribute to efficient and effective governance as strategies can be implemented based on empirical data," he added.



The preparatory meeting of experts aims to thrash out a regional agenda for adoption by more than 33 African Ministers due in Addis Ababa later this week on the theme: Towards improved civil status information for efficient public administration and generation of vital statistics for national development and MDGs monitoring in Africa. The back-to-back meetings are being convened by a partnership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Union Commission (AUC); and the African Development Bank, and the African Union Commission (AUC) and hosted by the Government of Ethiopia.

Mr. Dimitri Sanga, ECA's Officer-in-Charge at the African Centre for Statistics called on the experts to address the "technical, operational and policy issues that could support civil registration and vital statistics reforms and improvement in the region."

He underscored the need for standardization and a review of civil registration laws and regulations in line with international standards as some of the broad areas that would be addressed during the week.

For his part, Mr. Beejaye Kokil, Manager, Economic and Social Statistics Division at the African Development Bank noted that the absence of comprehensive civil registration impedes development efforts. This, he said, "affects the ability of countries to improve their public services due to lack of data and information required for managing development and monitoring the of MDGs."

Mr. Kokil also emphasized that civil registration and vital statistics "are at the center of the interface between population dynamics and planning social and economic programs in such areas as education, health, housing, urban development and public utilities."

Mr Yeo Dossina, Head of the Statistics Unit of the African Union Commission, stressed that Africa cannot assess the progress made on its integration process without strong civil registration and vital statistics. He further noted that several legal instruments of the AU call for "the promotion and strengthening of civil registration and vital statistics notably the African Charter on Human Rights, the Convention on Rights of Children and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, among others."

For more information on the conference and documents on civil registration, go to: <http://www.uneca.org/cr-ministerial-conference/>

Media inquiries, contact:
Sdenekew@uneca.org

Issued by:

ECA Information and Communication Service
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Tel: 251 11 5445098

Fax: +251-11-551 03 65

E-mail: ecainfo@uneca.org

Web: www.uneca.org
