

Statement by the Chairperson of the Commission on the Commemoration of the first African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Day

Addis Ababa, 10 August 2018: Today, Africa commemorates the First African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day under the theme “Promoting Innovative Universal Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems for Good Governance and Better Lives”.

Starting 2018, African CRVS Day will be celebrated every year on the 10th of August, to increase public awareness of the importance of making all African people visible wherever they live, through well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems.

Most African countries have civil registration laws for systematically registering vital events. However, very few countries have maintained a universal registration system that covers all vital events, including births, deaths and other vital events in between, and geographic areas of the country. More commonly referred to as the “Scandal of Invisibility”, an inadequate records system renders most of Africa’s poorest people invisible and marginalized. This, in turn, limits their access to socio-economic benefits in their country.

The continent cannot fulfil its dream of achieving Agenda 2063: “The Africa We Want”, unless we know who we are, how many we are, where we live, work and what we need to improve our living conditions. This requires that every vital event is registered and related statistics are collected, compiled, produced and disseminated in a regular and consistent manner, to guide policy and planning, inform decision-making processes, and track progress to ensure transparency and mutual accountability towards achieving Africa’s development agenda.

Efficient civil registration systems in Africa contribute towards improved systems of governance; improved capacity for individuals to claim their human and civil rights; a better information base for Governments to deliver services; and improved capacities for monitoring human development efforts. This makes investment in the CRVS agenda not only timely, but a strategic imperative for the continent. CRVS should form an integral part of the regular and routine governance of a country, and it is primarily the responsibility of Governments to ensure that the necessary resources are in place to run it smoothly and effectively.

In light of the importance of CRVS in everyday lives, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Union, in July 2016, declared 2017-2026 as the Decade for Repositioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa at continental, regional and national levels, and urged Governments to respond with appropriate actions.

As we celebrate the first CRVS day today, I call on all Governments to recognize the importance of CRVS by showing further commitment towards the strengthening of CRVS systems in their respective countries and allocating adequate resources to support CRVS initiatives in line with the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA).

I also urge all Member States to continue working on the modernization of national legal frameworks, IT infrastructures and innovative business process improvements to make CRVS systems responsive to public demands.

The African Union Commission will continue supporting Member States in improving the accessibility and quality of civil registration and related services.