

Report on the informal meeting of the African Registrars General, Nouakchott, Mauritania, 9 December 2017

A meeting of African Registrars General was organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) as a follow-up to the discussions at the Experts Meeting and the fourth Conference of Ministers responsible for Civil Registration that took place from 4 to 8 December 2017. In this meeting, 28 African countries participated. It was chaired by the Registrar General of Mauritania. Representatives of ECA, the legal officer of the Africa Union Commission (AUC) among others attended this meeting (see the attached list of attendees).

The representative of ECA reiterated the importance of establishing the Committee of Registrars General, as recommended by the Conference of Ministers, to advance the development and improvement of the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems in member States. He added that the Registrars General should work hand in hand with the Directors General of national statistics offices, which are organized as the Committee of Directors General under AUC and the Statistics Commission for Africa under ECA. The AUC legal adviser briefed the meeting on the procedures and approaches on establishing the Committee of African Registrars General (CoARG) under AUC so that it can formally report to the Conference of Ministers.

Three major outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

- (i) ***Formation of the Interim Committee of CoARG:*** At the meeting of the Registrars General, its members requested that the Task Force (formed at the meeting on the establishment of the Committee of African Registrars General, which was held in Victoria Falls in October 2017) be expanded to include representatives of Eastern and Western Africa Regions and to serve as an Interim Committee of Registrars General. Uganda and Guinea were nominated from each region, respectively. The Interim Committee was formed by acclamation. The main task of the Interim Committee is to ensure the formalization of CoARG expeditiously and to work with the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (APAI-CRVS) secretariat on other civil registration and vital statistics improvement initiatives.
- (ii) ***Fast tracking the formation of CoARG:*** The Interim Committee prepared an outline of a roadmap, with timeline, on how to fast track the submission for the request of establishing a stand-alone Specialized Technical Committee for Civil Registration to their Heads of States: The following major points were agreed on:
 - (a) The APAI-CRVS secretariat in ECA will prepare a concept note using AUC format by mid-January 2018;
 - (b) The Interim Committee will review and finalize the concept note and other pertinent documents by mid-February 2018;
 - (c) The Chair of the Interim Committee will send the concept note to the countries that attended the first meeting of the Registrars General. They in turn will send the concept note, using their diplomatic channels, to their Ambassadors in Addis Ababa, since they deal with the preparation of documents to be submitted to the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. They will further brief their respective Ministers responsible

for civil registration to lobby their respective Heads of State. The idea is to fast track the submission of necessary documents for the inclusion of this item on the Agenda of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2018;

(d) The Chair and Interim Committee members will also work to ensure that countries follow up with their respective Ambassadors in Addis Ababa for inclusion of this item on the Agenda of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in July 2018;

(e) The Chair and Interim Committee members will undertake a follow-up visit to Addis Ababa to lobby with ambassadors, as necessary;

(f) It is expected that the outcome of this effort should be known by May 2018.

(iii) *Next (informal) meeting of CoARG.* There was general agreement that CoARG should continue to meet as an experts meeting or as an association, until such time it is recognized by AUC as a standing committee in its own right. With this understanding, the following two points were agreed on:

(a) The CoARG meeting should be held in 2018. Deliberations and recommendations from the meeting will not be submitted formally to the Conference of Ministers as was made clear by AUC. Members, however, will report to their respective ministers on the outcome of the meeting;

(b) At the experts meeting, there was misunderstanding by some of the Directors General of national statistics offices on the nature of the proposed CoARG. The issue is that civil registration and vital statistics is a national endeavour, and it has to be viewed as such. The Registrars General will follow up on this and create common understanding with national statistics offices and other key stakeholders on the holistic approach to national civil registration and vital statistics systems, in their respective countries.