

The African Development Bank Group



PREPARATORY MEETING OF EXPERTS FOR THE
FIRST CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CIVIL
REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS
IN AFRICA

Opening Remarks

By

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
10 August 2010

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Honorable Minister

Representatives from the ECA, AUC, Ethiopia, UN systems

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

On behalf of the African Development Bank Group, I would like to welcome all participants to this preparatory meeting of experts for the Ministerial conference on civil registration and vital statistics in Africa whose theme is: ***“Towards Improved Civil Status Information for Efficient Public Administration and Generation of Statistics for National Development and MDGs monitoring in Africa”***. Let me also take this opportunity to thank our hosts the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the wonderful hospitality extended to all of us and for making this meeting and the up-coming Ministerial conference possible. We are honored by the presence of the Minister of Justice of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia H.E. Mr. Berhan Hailu who in spite of his busy schedules has made it a point to come and officiate at this meeting. We thank you Honorable Minister for your support.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting comes at an opportune time for the Bank and all African countries due to the current emphasis being placed on achieving measurable results on the ground, on evidence based planning and on putting mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating development results. The choice of the theme is also timely as the meeting should be able to address issues pertaining to the monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the MDGs and provide input to the forthcoming September 2010 UN meeting that will review progress towards the MDGs. The meeting is expected to deliberate on the need to improve civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa in order to improve the availability of data required to monitor and evaluate development outcomes. The absence of comprehensive civil registration has been and is continuously impeding development efforts, affecting countries' capacities to improve their public service efficiencies due to lack of data and information required for managing development results, including MDGs monitoring. For example, the development of health management information system is being affected by the absence or inadequate birth and death registrations, recording and compilation systems. Decentralization programs and democratization processes currently being implemented in a number of African countries are being challenged by the absence of conventional and relevant data on population dynamics from vital statistics systems.

The need for monitoring and evaluating development results clearly has placed statistics at the center of development initiatives and in particular

with regard to monitoring progress towards MDGs, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics play a critical role especially in between census rounds. Beyond the obvious benefits of evaluating development outcomes, 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.

However, despite their obvious benefits for fostering development, civil registration and vital statistical systems in Africa remain underdeveloped. We are all here because we recognize this sad situation and we want to commit ourselves to bring about improvements in this area and ensure the availability of more reliable and timely information to support development efforts in our countries.

The Role of the AfDB

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Development Bank stands ready to play a key role in providing the necessary financial and technical support for improving statistics in African countries, including civil registration and vital statistics which we are emphasizing as part of efforts to improve MDG monitoring on the continent. In these efforts, in collaboration with ECA and other partners, the first regional workshop on civil registration and vital statistics systems was convened in June 2009 in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. The workshop

endorsed comprehensive recommendations that addressed advocacy, operational, technical and partnership issues that are currently serving as roadmap to civil registration and vital statistics interventions in the African region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Tanzania workshop identified lack of political commitment, country ownership and leadership in civil registration and vital statistics undertakings as one fundamental deterring factor in improving the systems in the region and strongly recommended the organization of a Ministerial conference. Accordingly, this meeting is expected to address the long overdue fundamental challenges of civil registration and vital statistics systems in the region. I have no doubt that with the full commitment of everyone, we shall be able to overcome the challenges and address the situation.

I wish you a productive workshop.

Thank you all for your kind attention.