

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Kiren Rijju, Minister of State for Home Affairs
of India at the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital
Statistics in Asia and the Pacific
(Bangkok, 27 November, 2014)**

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

It is my privilege and honor to share this platform with eminent dignitaries from Asia and the Pacific. The Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) is truly a historical occasion and has come at an opportune time when the development discourse is in a state of transition. This Conference gives us an opportunity to take stock of the success achieved so far and plan for the road ahead. This is also an opportunity to learn from the shared experiences and to replicate best practices.

I am personally convinced that the CRVS can never become universal unless it becomes a peoples movement. The statistical system has to look at the human being behind the numbers and ensure that every child is able to enjoy a basic right, which is the right to “a name, nationality and family relations” as enshrined in the UN convention on child rights. The birth certificate is the basic document to prove identity. Hailing from a State that is on the international border, I am more than aware how important this is. Therefore my personal commitment is more than cent percent. I am truly happy to be here amongst all of you who are equally passionate about this.

The Regional Action Framework put forward by the UNESCAP envisions the achievement of universal civil registration in Asia and Pacific by 2024. Our Government works on a motto of “minimum Government, maximum Governance”. Our aim is to improve the lot of the common man in every possible way. Against this background, when the agenda of Universal Civil Registration by 2024 was put forward, the Indian Government saw this as one more opportunity to fulfill its motto. The Government has therefore set us an ambitious target of achieving by 2020. This mission has been given an appropriate name- “**Vision 2020**”.

The task is by no means simple- it is a big challenge for India to bridge a gap of 17% in birth registration and 33% in death registration. We are fully

committed and reasonably optimistic that we will be able to achieve the goal that we have set ourselves.

Achievements to date

The current level of registration of births and deaths of the country has reached 84% for births and 67% for deaths. 15 States have achieved cent per cent registration levels for births; 11 States have reached a level ranging between 80-99% and the remaining 9 States have reported a level of birth registration in the range of 50-80%. In the case of deaths, 5 States have achieved cent percent; 12 States have achieved a level ranging between 80-99% and the remaining States are below 50%. The increase in level of registration of births in past decade is 26% and in deaths it is 18%.

Major Challenges

India's ambitious target of achieving the goal of 100% registration of births and institutional deaths five years ahead of the ESCAP target is extremely ambitious to say the least. For achieving the set targets, the Office of the Registrar General, India is engaging with all the stakeholders in the CRVS such as health, planning and statistics departments; the UN agencies and civil society organizations. Increased budgetary provisions have been envisaged by the Central Government for CRVS. We would also be working with the State Governments to make similar commitments. To give a boost to the registration campaign the Government is planning to link birth and death registration to Government services such as issue of unique identification number (UID), national identity card, access to education, healthcare and insurance. Intensified advocacy among public on the need for birth certificates through a multi-modal media campaign is also being planned.

We have identified the barriers to birth and death registration, of which I mention a few

- Lack of awareness among general public on the need and importance of registration.
- Low demand due to acceptability of alternate documents for availing basic services;
- Involvement of Multi Departments and their lack of coordination;
- Need for enhancing IT infrastructure at the lowest level;
- Improving death registration especially of women and children;

- Strong political commitment.

We are in the process of formulating a National Action Plan that would look at each of these barriers and overcome them with systematic interventions

Other commitments or ambitions for improving CRVS

India under the Ministry of Home Affairs has taken several initiatives to strengthen the CRVS in the country by

- Linking of Governments welfare schemes with birth certificates
- Computerized registration
- Ensure registration of all Institutional births and deaths
- Use of CRS data for computing vital statistics and Planning
- Effective advocacy and monitoring
- Multi-modal publicity at different levels
- Capacity building of Civil Registration functionaries
- Increased budgetary allocation to strengthen the CRVS
- Linking CRVS with National Population Register.

We are committed to take all further steps that are required to achieve our goal. We aim to make “Vision 2020” a resounding success.

We commend the efforts of the UNESCAP and the development partners who have through this Conference brought CRVS to the centre stage. We would however like to caution that the commitment of all stakeholders has to be sustained and efforts continuous in order to achieve the goal. I would specifically appeal to the development partners to commit adequate resources to this in their country plans. I am aware that the pressures on the country offices from various sectoral programmes are heavy. Despite this, the need to commit definite financing to CRVS over the next five years is necessary.

Let me conclude by reiterating that India is fully committed to this agenda of getting everyone in the picture. We look forward to working with the international community in this regard.
