



BHUTAN

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STATEMENT BY

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**MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON
CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS (CRVS)
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

**24-28 November 2014
BANGKOK, THAILAND**

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**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

At the outset, I bring to you the warm greetings of the Prime Minister of Bhutan H.E. Lyonchhen Tshering Tobgay, Chair of the 70th Commission Session of ESCAP, who due to prior commitments could not join us. It is an honour for me to join you at this Ministerial Conference as his Special Envoy. On behalf of the Bhutanese delegation, I would like to thank ESCAP and other collaborating partners for hosting and organizing this important event.

Mr. Chairman,

The first Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Asia and the Pacific takes place at an opportune moment. We are at the cusp of landmark events: as the conclusion of the MDG target date draws upon us, the international community has plunged into consideration of future global development framework that will succeed the MDGs. Indeed we have reason for optimism and for high expectations. We are looking forward to an intergovernmental process that will lead us to an inclusive and transformational future global development framework, post-2015, with sustainable development at its core.

In its Report last year, the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda called for the new post-2015 development agenda to drive five big transformative shifts, among which, leaving no one behind was listed as number one. To “leave no one behind” and to implement and realize inclusive development, reliable data and statistics of those for whom development is of utmost importance.

Sadly, many CRVS systems including in the Asia-Pacific region remain incomplete and inadequate. Millions of lives and life events go undocumented. Hence, it is only sensible that CRVS is given due importance in the post-2015 development agenda as well as the processes leading up to the formulation of the future global development agenda. In this context, my delegation recognizes the timeliness of convening this high level conference on CRVS for the Asia-Pacific, today as we stand at the confluence of global development frameworks.

Mr. Chairman,

In this regard, we are also pleased that the Open Working Group on SDGs proposed capacity building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts as **SDG 17.18**. This is of direct relevance to our discussions today. Bhutan as a member of the Open Working Group relentlessly supported this cause. We hope to see the integrity of this issue retained in the much anticipated release of the SDG's Synthesis Report in New York in coming weeks.

I am pleased to inform that the Royal Government of Bhutan accords high priority to CRVS and a population and housing census is being planned in 2015. We have also made statistics one of the key areas of cooperation and collaboration between ESCAP and the Royal Government.

Mr. Chairman,

Please allow me to highlight some of the significant undertakings that we have initiated in recent times to advance CRVS system in Bhutan:

- 1) A new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the registration of every birth and death has been drafted and is currently being reviewed. This is being done under the aegis of the Government to Citizens (G2C) initiatives for the enhancement of good-governance and public services delivery.
- 2) As a way to develop a clearer understanding of CRVS and to identify areas that require immediate attention of the government, a comprehensive assessment of CRVS system in Bhutan is initiated with the support of WHO SEARO.
- 3) With a view to strengthen Health Management and Information System (HMIS), which is considered ‘lifeblood’ of any health systems, we have been successfully implementing the District Health Information System (DHIS2) alias Druk-HMIS as a “robust and dynamic” web-based National HMIS.

However, we face challenges and constraints. Inadequate technical skills and infrastructure are the main challenges that have to be overcome in order to further strengthen CRVS in Bhutan. Lack of skills in areas such as authentic classification and coding of diseases at par with global standard and medically certifying all causes of deaths is one such example. Furthermore, structural impediments resulting from the inaccessible terrains restrict setting up of adequate infrastructure in far-flung remote villages.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation would like to commend the ESCAP Secretariat and equally the Regional Steering Group for the excellent draft Regional Action Framework presented before us and I am convinced that this will be helpful in steering our commitments and efforts in realizing our shared vision: the “Universal and responsive CRVS systems in all Asian and Pacific countries by 2024”.

It is our hope that our deliberations here will converge with other principle inputs to the Post 2015 development agenda and eventually culminate in a single global development agenda that truly reflects the universal aspirations of all people in the world.

In conclusion, allow me to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of this landmark Ministerial Declaration on CRVS, its goals, national targets and action areas as outlined in the Regional Action Framework.

In keeping with the principles of our national development philosophy of Gross National Happiness that emphasizes people centered and inclusive sustainable development for all Bhutanese, we look forward to working with ESCAP and other development partners to achieve a universal and responsive CRVS system in the Bhutan by 2024.

TASHI DELEK & THANK YOU!