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Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions: statistics

Summaries of special sessions of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific

Note by the secretariat**

Summary

The present information note contains an overview of the special sessions of the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific. The special sessions were organized by development partners and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as side events to the Ministerial Conference.

The note outlines the content and key issues addressed during the special sessions.

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* E/ESCAP/71/L.1/Rev.1.

** The present note is being issued without formal editing. It was submitted late owing to the need to allow the Committee on Statistics to conclude its deliberations on the Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics at its fourth session, held from 25 to 27 March 2015.

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I. Introduction

1. The Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics was held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, Thailand from 24 to 28 November 2014. The present report covers the special events that were held along the side-lines of the Ministerial Conference. The account and outcomes of the Ministerial Conference is contained in document E/ESCAP/71/27.

II. Special sessions

A. Innovations for CRVS

2. UNICEF, Plan International and the World Health Organization hosted a special session on “Innovations for CRVS” on 24 November.

3. The session was moderated by Mr. Boonchai Kijsanayotin, Co-Chair of the Asian eHealth Information Network (AeHIN). The presenters included: Mr. Edward Duffus, Digital Birth Registration Manager, Plan International; Mr. Mark Landry, Coordinator, Health Intelligence and Innovation Division of Health Systems, World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific; and Ms. Kendra Gregson, Senior Advisor, Social Welfare and Justice Systems, UNICEF.

4. The panel highlighted the importance of fostering political dialogue around the use of information and communication technologies for the improvement of CRVS systems. The panel presented selected best practices using examples from across Asia and the Pacific.

5. The panel emphasised that innovation can address many of the challenges in building effective CRVS systems. However, to achieve the long term vision of systems which encompass all CRVS functions and serve all stakeholders, a holistic enterprise architecture approach is required. Such an approach ensures that technology solutions meet the functional needs of CRVS but also the following more technical characteristics of being cost-effective; scalable widespread, national rollout; sustainable; flexible; interoperable; secure and user friendly.

6. The panel stressed three key messages: a strong CRVS governance structure will provide a clear direction for ICT systems across all stakeholders; analysis of the existing CRVS processes and systems is essential to define clear system requirements; and appropriate technology can only be defined once the system requirements are known.

B. Civil registration in the context of emergencies, displacement and to prevent statelessness

7. UNHCR organized a special session on “Civil registration in the context of emergencies, displacement and to prevent statelessness” on 24 November.

8. The event was moderated by Mr. Alistair Boulton, Assistant Representative (Protection) at the UNHCR Regional Coordinator’s Office in Bangkok. The speakers included Ms. Lourdes Hufana, Interim Assistant National Statistician, the Philippines; Mr. Egad Ligon, Executive Director, IDEALS Inc.; Dr. Seree Nonthasoot, Thailand’s Representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights; and Mr. Nicholas Oakeshott, Regional Protection Officer, UNHCR Regional Coordinator’s Office in Bangkok.

9. The session examined some of the major challenges that emergencies and displacement create for CRVS systems and how these have been addressed in two different national contexts. The panel discussed the role that civil registration plays in establishing a legal identity and how birth registration can help to prevent statelessness. A few examples shared by the panel included:

a) A project that issued over 120,000 birth, marriage and death certificates to the victims of Super-Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines.

b) Key steps taken by the Government of Thailand to reform its civil registration system in order to allow the registration of vital events of asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless people and migrant; including these groups within CRVS systems is particularly important as they often have the most to benefit from the protective environment these systems can help to create.

10. The panel highlighted the need to establish good practices in the region in registering the vital events of populations vulnerable to human rights violations and identified the importance of regional cooperation in improving civil registration systems through the exchange of good practices and the adoption of common approaches that can facilitate effective civil registration in the migration context.

11. The participants welcomed the approach of the steps that the Government of the Philippines, UNHCR and civil society partners had taken to respond to the civil registration needs that emerged following Super-Typhoon Yolanda. The participants also emphasized the importance of finding ways to increase understanding among all stakeholders of the relationship between civil registration and the acquisition of nationality.

C. Building Civil Registrars Networks

12. The “Building Civil Registrars Networks” event was hosted by the Pacific Civil Registrars Network (PCRN), with support from UNHCR and UNICEF, on 25 November. This event followed on the Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars Meeting and Innovations Fair, which was held from 15 to 17 July 2014 in Pattaya, Thailand.

13. The two key outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Civil Registrars Meeting and Innovations Fair held in Pattaya were a commitment from those present to establish four sub-regional networks from which a regional network may be formed, and a proposed amendment to the draft Ministerial Declaration to

“Get every one in the picture” in Asia and the Pacific to support the development of a regional network of civil registrars.

14. The Pacific Civil Registrars Network outlined steps that have been taken to establish a civil registrars’ network for the Pacific sub-region: terms of reference have been adopted by 19 Pacific countries, development partners and private sector providers joining the network, and a promotional leaflet and poster on the network’s focus to share migrant death information between Pacific countries have been produced.

15. The participants shared lessons that could assist other sub-regions in forming a network, these included: the importance of one or two countries taking a leadership role; the need to quickly adopt terms of reference; and the value of a simple work programme of quick wins that can be used to demonstrate progress and seek partner support.

16. The participants highlighted the importance of coordination among stakeholders and that a lack of funding should not hinder moving forward with the networks, as demonstrated by the Pacific network. The participants added that web-based communication and opportunities to meet in person when possible can bring significant benefits until additional support can be identified.

17. The participants stated a renewed commitment to build sub-regional civil registrars networks, in order to facilitate information sharing and peer-to-peer technical support, which will be essential to the successful implementation of the Ministerial Declaration.

D. Leave no data behind: CRVS and the data revolution

18. The special session on “Leave no data behind: CRVS and the data revolution” was organised by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) on 25 November. It featured a panel discussion and the launch of a video documentary entitled “Everyone Counts, Count Everyone”.

19. The event was moderated by Dr. Johannes Jütting, Secretariat Manager, PARIS21. The panellists included: H.E. Mr. Lautafi Fio Selafi Purcell, Minister, Ministry of Public Enterprises, Samoa; Dr. Lisa Grace Bersales, National Statistician and Civil Registrar General, Philippine Statistics Authority; Ms. Haishan Fu, Director, Development Economics Data Group, World Bank Group; and Mr. Helge Brunborg, Senior Research Fellow, Statistics Norway.

20. The panel remarked that CRVS is a “whole of government” and community affair in Samoa. The panel also cited the seamless integration of civil registration work and of vital statistics generation in the Philippines, which allows a good flow of data between the two systems. It further stressed the importance of promoting a multi-dimensional participatory approach to and advocacy on the use of vital statistics in planning and policy.

21. The panel informed that the World Bank and the World Health Organization have drawn an investment/scaling-up plan for CRVS to help developing countries in their efforts to develop and strengthen their national CRVS systems. The panel also emphasized the importance of vital statistics in particular and of development data in general to be a priority in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

22. The panel mentioned the stages of civil registration and pointed out that countries could learn from Norway's more than 50 years of experience in CRVS and its extensive use in public administration and planning, which would potentially allow countries to leap-frog CRVS development.

23. The participants noted that national statistical acts and policies should provide guidance on the data and statistics that need to be produced and disseminated in the national statistical system, including the roles and responsibilities of data producers in other ministries and government agencies. They also highlighted the importance of user's trust on data.

24. The participants shared that the experience of some countries show that the adoption of the national strategy for the development of statistics (NSDS) framework has been effective in advancing and accelerating improvements in the statistical system, including initiatives to strengthen vital statistics generation. They expressed that the NSDS has the potential to strengthen partnership, coordination and commitment of various statistics stakeholders, including those working on CRVS, particularly at the highest-level of government.

25. The participants highlighted that one key issue in the data revolution is sustaining interest in the CRVS agenda, in particular when improving the system is a long-term process.

E. The role of CRVS in preventing child marriage in the Asia and the Pacific region

26. UNFPA and UNICEF organised a special session highlighting the potential for timely and complete birth registration as a means of preventing child marriage on 25 November.

27. The session was moderated by Ms. Kiran Bhatia, Regional Gender Adviser, UNFPA. Opening remarks were provided by Ms. Nobuko Horibe, Regional Director, UNFPA. The session featured the screening of a film from the UN Secretary-General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Violence against Women and a short film produced by Plan Bangladesh, followed by a panel discussion. Closing remarks were delivered by Mr. Daniel Toole, Regional Director, UNICEF.

28. The panellists included Dr. Chandrasekaran Chandramouli, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, India; Ms. Alissa Qotrunnada Munawaroh Wahid, Social Activist, National Head of GUSDUR-ian Network, Director of the Wahid Institute and Vice-chairperson of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia; Dr. Rinchen Chopel, Director General, South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children; Mr. Md. Abdul Hasib Bhuyan, General Secretary of Sylhet District Muslim Marriage Registrar Samity, Bangladesh; and Ms. Saraswati Shrestha, a youth activist and peer educator on rights of young people in rural Nepal.

29. The panel noted that birth registration is important because it ensures the right to citizenship, and marriage registration gives property rights for women. It emphasised that governments should sensitise parents through media and community mobilization to their responsibility to register all births immediately.

30. The panel highlighted that religious leaders have communicative power and can play a key role in promoting universal birth registration and in

discouraging child marriage as a harmful practice for women and their children. It also stressed that universal birth registration onto online databases can act as a mechanism for prevention of child marriage where customary law requires marriage registration, noting that there are privacy and confidentiality issues to be considered.

31. The panel emphasised that preventing child marriage requires the effective implementation of laws and the development of synergy of national laws, including personal laws, with international frameworks. Implementing the law requires cross-sectorial collaboration from the national to the community level. It also recognized the vital role that regional bodies can play in advocating for implementation of legal frameworks on child marriage prevention.

F. Youth voices matter: Get us in the picture!

32. The special session “Youth voices matter: Get us in the picture!” was organised by Plan International, UNICEF and ESCAP on 26 November. It featured a panel discussion and presentations, followed by a youth declaration.

33. The event was moderated by Mr. Ahmad Alhendawi, United Nations Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth. The panellists included several young people. The youth included Dina from Indonesia, Carlo from the Philippines, Fai from Thailand and Gao Wen from China.

34. The panel highlighted the importance of involving youth in decision-making. The panel reaffirmed the call for CRVS to be a priority in the development agenda once the Millennium Development Goals reach completion in 2015.

35. The panel discussed the importance of birth registration and more specifically how the lack thereof can impact the lives of minority groups in emergency situations. The panel also gave an account of the experience of growing up unregistered, and the implications it has on access to education.

36. The panel gave some strong examples of how country-level efforts can help overcome challenges to registering large populations and shared how they will continue to contribute to CRVS efforts in the region.

37. Two youth from Germany shared their experiences advocating for greater investment in CRVS in their home country.

38. The youth panellist concluded the session by presenting a youth call to action, outlining ten areas that require action from government, civil society and the private sector, these are to:

1) Guarantee that every child is registered and able to fully access their rights by 2024.

2) Develop specific plans to register children from the most vulnerable and marginalised groups.

3) Make every effort to facilitate late registration for those not registered at birth without them having to incur fees or penalties.

4) Ensure any incentives intended to increase birth registration do no harm and do not have adverse impacts on other rights. Efforts aimed at increasing birth registration rates should focus on addressing the barriers to birth registration, simplifying procedures and integrating registration within other interventions.

5) Increase investment and resource allocation for free and inclusive CRVS systems.

6) Bring registration services closer to the people and make them accessible for all. Governments should ensure local registration facilities have adequate capacity (e.g. are provided with relevant materials and supplies as well as the means for safe and efficient storage of documents) to meet local needs and that are decentralised and accessible to all.

7) Listen to, consult with and involve youth when making decisions and developing and implementing national CRVS plans.

8) Implement country-specific communication strategies to focus not just on informing people but compelling them to act and rethink their approach to registration of life events.

9) Invest in innovative platforms for CRVS systems by also including the use of digital technologies.

10) Take measures to store and safeguard documents and data (both digital and hard copy) related to birth registration in order to protect the records and ensure confidentiality.

G. Strengthening vital statistics systems: Strategies to improve knowledge about causes of death in Asia and the Pacific

39. The Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies organized a special session on 26 November to launch their latest policy brief “What Are the Practical Interventions Necessary to Reduce Ignorance/Uncertainty About Causes of Death and Disease Burden in the Asia-Pacific Region?”.

40. The event was moderated by Mr. Dale Huntington, Director of the Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, and also featured a presentation by Prof. Alan Lopez, Melbourne Laureate Professor and Rowden-White Chair of Global Health and Burden of Disease Measurement, University of Melbourne.

41. The panel described the Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, which is a unique partnership made of governments, development agencies, and the research community, to act as a knowledge broker between researchers and policy makers, and to promote evidence-based health policy-making in the region. The Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies produces policy briefs that synthesise the best evidence and experience from different contexts in relation to important policy challenges in a concise report addressed to policy makers.

42. The panel launched a policy brief which included a concise summary of recommended practical interventions to improve knowledge about causes of death in the Asia-Pacific region. The viable options to strengthen cause of death data systems are proposed in a framework with a series of actions based on literature and national experience. The basic strategies are suggested according to three levels of cause of death statistical development of a country.

H. Regional Consultation on the Global Financing Facility for Every Woman Every Child

43. The Regional consultation on the Global Financing Facility for Every Woman Every Child was organized by The Partnership for Maternal,

Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) on 26 November. The session featured a panel and discussion, followed by a reception.

44. The event was moderated by Dr. Stefan Germann, Board Member and Director for Partnerships, Innovation and Accountability, World Vision International. The panel included Ms. Anneke Schmider, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics focal point, Department of Health Statistics and Information Systems, World Health Organization; Mr. Anir Chowdhury, Advisor (Access to Information Programme), Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh; and Dr. Enrique A. Tayag, Assistant Secretary, Department of Health, Philippines.

45. The panel highlighted that as the post-2015 development agenda arrives, there is unprecedented global momentum to further accelerate improvements in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH). To support this, the creation of a Global Financing Facility (GFF) for Every Woman Every Child was announced in September 2014.

46. The panel noted that the Global Financing Facility seeks to build long-term funding commitments for women's and children's health. Aiming to achieve universal birth and death registration by 2030, the GFF will support the development and financing of multi-sectoral national CRVS plans and will establish a Centre of Excellence for CRVS that articulates best practices and shares lessons on implementation.

47. The panel emphasized that the information needed to monitor the impact of interventions comes from various sources: censuses, CRVS, national health accounts and resource tracking. While there used to be heavy reliance on surveys for this information, today much of it can be obtained from a well-functioning CRVS system.

48. The panel explained that Bangladesh has made large strides ahead in establishing service points for electronic birth registration, many of which are associated with private services to increase availability and ensure sustainability. The Government realizes that CRVS represents an opportunity to streamline social safety net programmes; to develop shared health records for citizens to help build medical histories of patients; to bring large swathes of unbanked population into the folds of financial inclusion; to detect and prevent underage marriages; and to recognize citizens properly and uniquely from birth to death.

49. The participants noted that financing for both 'registration', which implies the legal act of recording the event in the civil register, and 'notification', which is information provided by a designated intermediary on the characteristics surrounding the event, are important.

50. The participants emphasized the importance of coordination between the civil registration department, the health sector and the national statistical office. In particular, how the CRVS plan is to be linked to the national statistics development strategy.

51. The panel emphasized the growing role of big data and open data would change the type of information collected and the mechanisms by which they are collected.

I. Ministerial round table on civil registration and the development agenda beyond 2015

52. The Ministerial round table on civil registration and the development agenda beyond 2015 was organized by ESCAP on 27 November. It was composed of a panel discussion, followed by a plenary discussion.

53. The event was moderated by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. The panellists included H.E. Mr. AHM Mustafa Kamal, Minister, Ministry of Planning, Bangladesh; H.E. Dr. San Lwin, Deputy Minister, Presidential Office, Myanmar; H.E. Dato Sri Dr. Haji Wan Junaidi bin Tuanku Jaafar, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, Malaysia; H.E. Ms. Veena Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister for Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Fiji; and H.E. Mr. Khanh Ngoc Nguyen, Vice Minister of Justice, Viet Nam.

54. The panel stressed that civil registration is the right of individuals and the responsibility of Governments. The panel reaffirmed the role of CRVS for the post-2015 development agenda, as already highlighted by the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the proposals of the Open Working Group, as well as its role to realize the data revolution.

55. The panel reiterated the importance of ‘leaving no one behind’, and that functional CVRS systems cover both nationals and non-nationals. The panel highlighted that the legal identity is crucial for human rights and that timely and accurate statistics are important to deliver public services to the right people at the right time.

56. The panel highlighted the fact that there are specificities of each country in the region and thus national approaches for improving CRVS must be based on national priorities and the national context.

57. The panel discussed the importance of coordination across Government for strengthening the CRVS system.

58. The panel suggested the need for a stand-alone sustainable development goal on CRVS in the post-2015 development agenda. The panel continued that such a goal would highlight the social cost of inadequate CRVS systems, including the crucial role of CRVS in improving the public health system.

59. The panel noted that coherent national legal frameworks, which are consistently implemented, form the basis for effective CRVS systems. The panel noted that functional CRVS systems can reduce costs in other areas, including for statistical compilations and health care provisioning, and that future cost savings may help stimulate investments in CRVS.

60. The participants remarked that while coordination is essential for well-functioning CRVS systems, there are many difficulties in enhancing coordination between government agencies.

61. The participants noted that CRVS is not adequately represented in the post-2015 development agenda; specifically, the current proposal does not adequately capture the importance of CRVS from a human rights perspective or the crucial role of CRVS in the production of vital statistics for development monitoring. The participants stated with concern that national

development plans often do not reflect the need for strengthened CRVS systems in terms of national actions or resourcing.

J. Modernizing the role of the health sector in improving CRVS

62. The special session on “Modernizing the role of the health sector in improving CRVS” was organised by the World Health Organization on 28 November. In a panel discussion format, this session provided an opportunity to share recent developments at global and country levels, and to discuss how the health sector can work with other stakeholders to achieve a holistic approach to CRVS.

63. The session was moderated by Dr. Ties Boerma, Director of Health Statistics and Information Systems at the World Health Organization. The panellists included: H.E Ms. Aishath Rameela, Minister of State for Health, Ministry of Health, Maldives; Mr. Lo Veasnakiry, Director, Department of Planning and Health Information, Ministry of Health, Cambodia; Mr. Naeem UzZaffar, Member (Social Sector and Devolution), Planning Commission (Leader), Pakistan; and Mr. Peter Harper, Deputy Australian Statistician, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia.

64. The panel highlighted the role of health in strengthening CRVS, noting the importance of CRVS data for health policy and planning. The panel noted the advantages of automated cause of death registration systems.

65. The panel shared good practices, including the high level of birth and death registration, as well as marriages and divorces in the Maldives; innovations in the health sector information systems, including the implementation of a web-based system, in Cambodia; the creation of a steering committee to improve CRVS systems, which includes health ministries from the provincial areas in Pakistan; and the close relationship between health and the registration and statistics systems in Australia.

66. The panel also noted a number of difficulties in improving national CRVS systems. For example, the quality of data on causes of death can be impacted by the high turnover rate of doctors; ensuring data quality management is difficult; relationships with the private sector are often not utilised; and births in rural areas are often difficult to register, even when linked to education initiatives.

67. The panel highlighted a number of potential opportunities. Forming strong administrative linkage between health systems and CRVS can cut reduce duplication, for example, hospital delivery forms can be used for birth registration and existing maternal death surveillance systems can be merged in the CRVS system. One panellist shared that Pakistan is considering a model where health data is immediately linked with the registration agency, and encouraging registration through visiting lady health workers.

68. The panel noted several areas of development that could improve data quality, including implementing international classifications and linking with cross-cutting health initiatives for improving CRVS.

69. The panel emphasised the role of the health sector as a contributor and beneficiary of the CRVS system, and that the health sector’s use of CRVS data ensures they are strong players within the system. The panel emphasised the importance of releasing microdata to researchers and interested agencies for improved analysis and policy making.

70. The panel noted the importance of adequate financing and legal frameworks. The panel also stressed the utility of identifying opportunities for building awareness of registration at immunisation and health clinics.

K. Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan: Experiences and lessons for the Asia-Pacific region

71. The Brisbane Accord Group organized a special session focusing on the country experiences and lessons learnt under the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan on 28 November. The event included three presentations and a directed discussion, followed by a lunch reception with a poster exhibition showcasing key achievements from each of the Pacific countries and territories, along with key regional activities.

72. The session was moderated by Dr. Gerald Haberkorn, Director of the Statistics for Development Division at the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The presenters were: H.E. Mr. Nandi Glassie, Minister of Health, Cook Islands; Mr. Joe Iati, Registrar General, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Vanuatu; and H.E. Ms. Veena Bhatnagar, Assistant Minister of Health, Republic of Fiji.

73. The panel provided an overview of the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan (PVSAP) and of the Brisbane Accord Group, a consortium of 11 technical partners which work together to improve coordination of support and subsequently maximise returns on the investments made; while supporting countries to improve the quality and accessibility of CRVS data. It was noted that the Pacific Vital Statistics Action Plan is consistent with the Regional Action Framework in that it requires countries to complete a system assessment and develop and implement a national CRVS plan.

74. The panel noted the importance of sharing experiences both in the Pacific and in the broader Asia-Pacific region.

75. The panel discussed:

a) The use of CRVS data to monitor health policy impacts in the Cook Islands, noting that the Cook Islands has been able to demonstrate the impact of current health policies around maternal and newborn care on infant mortality rates through improved CRVS reporting, subsequently supporting better planning;

b) achievements that Vanuatu has been able to make in improving birth registration coverage by linking registration to school enrolment; registering infants at hospital at birth; and securing a memorandum of understanding that supports CRVS;

c) The success of Fiji in securing high level, and continuous political commitment and engaging a broad range of stakeholders through their national committee, and stakeholder workshops.

76. The panel highlighted the importance of embedding political support for CRVS in national planning processes and integrating this into the routine functions of the government, the role of national committees and partners' support in bringing together stakeholders, country ownership of the improvement process, and the importance of data sharing across borders in the region due to off-island vital events and dual citizenship.

77. The participants outlined some of the steps underway, for instance how the new Pacific Civil Registrars Network is working with Pacific

countries on data sharing. Similarities with challenges faced in Asia were also highlighted, including the importance of mobile registration in reaching remote island communities.

L. Moving forward: Civil registration and identification systems as smart investments

78. The special session on “Moving forward: Civil registration and identification systems as smart investments” was organized by the World Bank Group on 28 November. The event included a panel discussion, followed by an exchange with the participants.

79. Dr. Ulrich Zachau, Country Director for Southeast Asia of the World Bank Group delivered the welcome and opening remarks.

80. The event was moderated by Ms. Gwen Robinson, Senior Fellow, Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University. The panellists included Mr. Tim Costello, Chief Executive, World Vision Australia; H.E. Mr. Dionisio Babo, Minister, Ministry of Justice, Timor-Leste; H.E. Mr. Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs, India; and H.E. Mr. Saysi Santyvong, Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs, Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

81. The panel emphasized that strengthening CRVS contributes to addressing the issues of transparency and inequality.

82. The panel also recognized the progress made by their respective governments to improve their national CRVS systems. The panel indicated that in Timor-Leste, a government resolution to establish a National Secretariat for CRVS has been submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. It also pointed out that India expects to achieve universal birth registration and to provide a unique ID at birth by 2020, which is earlier than the 2024 goal stated in the Regional Action Framework on CRVS in Asia and the Pacific. The panel further added that establishing a national population registry is key to India’s development agenda and that its unique identification programme, the Aadhaar project, aims to provide every resident with a unique number that can be used to access public services. In another example, the panel explained that Lao PDR has formed a national coordination committee with representatives from several ministries, but a CRVS legal framework is yet to be established. The panel requested development partners to provide financial and technical support for CRVS and identification management systems.

83. The participants enquired about the role of the private sector in improving CRVS and about the incentives provided to Indian residents to obtain a unique Aadhaar number.