

UNITED NATIONS



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CLOSING REMARKS

United Nations expert group meeting

**Methodologies and lessons learned to evaluate the completeness
and quality of vital statistics data from civil registration**

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As recognized by UN Member States in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, birth registration is a crucial mechanism for providing legal identity to persons. Such identity is essential for inclusive participation in modern society, including for access to services often provided by the state such as education and health care. As mentioned in my opening remarks, the importance of providing legal identity is one motivation for addressing the issues covered by this meeting. Your focus, however, has been mostly on the statistical side: how to ensure that registration data are sufficient in terms of quality and completeness so that they can be used successfully for monitoring population trends.

In that regard, in April of 2016, the Commission on Population and Development adopted a resolution on strengthening the demographic evidence base for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That resolution considered all of the major forms of demographic data. Regarding registration data, the Commission urged governments “to strengthen systems for the universal, reliable and timely registration of births, marriages, divorces and deaths, among other vital events, for linking the registration of vital events with the production of vital statistics and for assessing and improving over time the coverage, timeliness and accuracy of data generated by such systems, and to promote the use of civil registration for collecting information on causes of death, in accordance with the International Classification of Diseases established by the World Health Organization”.

Thus, for various reasons, improving the quality and completeness of vital statistics data derived from civil registration has great importance. Over the past two days, you have deliberated on the

methodologies and lessons learned from the experiences of the available studies. I regret that other events have prevented me from attending most of the sessions. Nevertheless, my colleagues have informed me that the rich discussions have contributed greatly to our understanding of the existing state of knowledge with regard to analytical methods for use at both the national and local levels, in particular for low- and middle-income countries. The meeting also reviewed recent progress and experiments in OECD countries and in various developing countries focusing on the use of validation studies based on record linkage that have been used to assess the completeness and quality of birth and death records.

The Population Division intends to prepare a report summarizing the conclusions of the meeting, the lessons learned, and any recommendations based on the evidence presented and discussions at the meeting. The results of the meeting will contribute to the preparation, together with the UN Statistics Division, of a new UN handbook providing operational guidelines for the evaluation of the geographic coverage of civil registration and of the completeness and quality of vital statistics data derived from civil registration at the national and subnational levels. As part of the follow-up to this meeting, it will be good for the two Divisions to meet to review the progress made and to discuss the next steps in this work.

This meeting was made possible by the support provided to the Population Division by Statistics Korea. Once again, I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for financing this expert group meeting. I also wish to thank my colleagues from the UN Population Division for the skill and commitment they have demonstrated in organizing this meeting. I also thank all of the participants for your constructive contributions to the discussion — with special thanks to those who travelled from far corners of the earth in order to participate in the meeting. On behalf of the Population Division, let me say that we are aware that your contributions to this work are done on your own time and often even partly at your own expense. We appreciate the efforts that you make and your commitment to participating in the international discussions of these issues at the United Nations.

I wish you a safe return home, and I look forward to seeing you again in the near future, whether in Chicago, Cape Town, New York, Geneva, or elsewhere.