



VANUATU COUNTRY STATEMENT

2nd Asia/Pacific CRVS Ministerial Conference

16-19 November 2021, Bangkok, Thailand

Agenda item #11

The importance of civil registration and vital statistics and legal identity for all to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda

Distinguished Excellency's and Delegates,
United Nations & Development Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tropical greetings from the REPUBLIC OF VANUATU!

Mr Chairman,

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) is foundational to achieving the 2030 Agenda by counting everyone and making everyone visible with a legal identity. One of the foundational principles of human rights is stated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Yet the absence of a legal identity and proof of identity serves as a barrier to fundamental rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration.

The fundamental connection between human rights and the civil registration of vital events was made when the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Right of the Child stated that "Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name". Vanuatu is party to both the Convention and the Covenant.

Legal identity, which itself is a right, can be first established through birth registration. Target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)—*By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration*—presents an opportunity for the Government of Vanuatu to link civil registration and national identification systems. A link enabled by the National Identification Number as assigned to each individual at birth.

For the Government of Vanuatu accurate identification of all citizens and residents facilitates the provision of targeted services, such as essential health services and social safety net programs, but can also contribute to achieving universal health coverage and substantial coverage of the vulnerable through social protection systems.

Based on the civil registration data and the legal identity the Government of Vanuatu will ensure that citizens can exercise their human rights (provided with a legal identity), civic rights (having access to services as education and health) and their political right to vote.

Mr Chairman, Allow me to make an additional intervention,

This week the Vanuatu Parliament passed two important CRVS and Identity Management laws.

First law, the law for the National Identity Card Act No. of 2021 ("the Bill") sets out a comprehensive legislative scheme for National Identity Cards to be issued to citizens of Vanuatu.

The objective of this Bill is to provide Vanuatu with National Identity Card legislation as this is currently missing in the legal framework related to Civil Registration and Identity Management.

In 2020, Government approved the use of National ID for voting in all elections. This is to enhance voter identification and reduce election fraud. This process of harmonizing registration systems should reduce duplication of task carried out by both CRVS department and Electoral Office and cost saving for the Government. This effort of linking Voting using National ID will also enable Government to achieve its international commitment under SDG 16.9 "By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration."

Second Law, the Law for the Civil Registration and Identity Management Act No. of 2021 ("the Bill") will replace the out of date Civil Status (Registration) Act [CAP

61] which commenced in 1971 when civil registration was done mostly manually. The Bill will usher in a modern and robust legal framework for civil registration and identity management reflecting current best practices as well as flexibility in enabling current and future technological innovation.

We thank you for your listening and may God bless you all!

Mr KAP Calo Andy

Registrar General (Director)

Department of Civil Registry and Vital Statistics

Ministry of Internal Affairs

REPUBLIC OF VANUATU