



Support for the Rabat Process on Migration and Development

Meeting of Experts on Civil Registry

“Improving civil status registration systems and combating document fraud”

Warsaw, Poland, 09-11 May 2011

CONCEPT NOTE

The Euro-African Process on Migration and Development

The Euro-African Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, held in Rabat in July 2006, launched a flexible and dynamic cooperation mechanism between States located along the West-African migration route. Two years later, more than 60 European and African countries participated in the Second Ministerial Conference on the *Euro-African Process of Migration and Development* (“Rabat Process”) organised in Paris in 2008, and agreed on a Three-year Cooperation Programme.

A third Ministerial Conference will take place in Dakar late in 2011 to evaluate the Three-year Paris Cooperation Programme and to agree a new agenda as of 2012. The members of the Rabat Process’s “*Comité de Pilotage*” (the main decision-making body directing the process) decided to organise a series of expert meetings to directly contribute to preparations for the Dakar Conference.

In this context, the European Commission (EC) has launched an initiative aimed at supporting the Rabat Process by supplying an open consultation framework on a thematic and geographic basis, while strengthening the leadership of key participants and promoting the Euro-African dialogue and the exchange of good practices. This initiative is designed as an open but structured instrument aimed at encouraging and supporting progress achieved in the Rabat Process by allowing the signing States to participate actively in a constructive dialogue on all migration-related issues. The support project is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and the Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP).

Civil status within the context of migration management

One of the key recommendations adopted at the 2008 Paris Ministerial Conference in the fight against irregular migration is to combat document fraud and improve the quality of civil status registries. The two issues are indeed interlinked: if travel documents have to be secured through standardised security features, it is equally important that issuing authorities make sure that they are not obtained by deception, for instance using falsified source documents, and that the information on the document is accurate.





4 - Improving the quality of civil status registries and combating documentary fraud

4-1- Support African countries expressing the need, as regards the improvement of their civil status registration systems, by:

- *Creating and implementing community awareness-raising programmes on the need to register births; and by involving opinion leaders - local, religious and traditional authorities – in the promotion of these programmes.*
- *Promoting the enhancement of the overall capacity of civil status registry departments.*
- *Modernising and securing civil status documents and ensuring security, particularly through information technology and biometrics.*
- *Setting up, where necessary and if reliability can be guaranteed, mobile units for civil status registration procedures.*
- *Encouraging the creation and networking of civil status registration so as to exchange best practices more efficiently.*
- *Compiling an inventory of and assessing all the bilateral and multilateral cooperation programmes regarding civil status registry systems, with a view to pooling European countries' efforts in the future.*

4 -2 - Combat document fraud by:

- *Using information technology and biometrics in identity and travel documents.*
- *Rendering secure the processes for producing and storing blank travel documents.*
- *Supporting, for countries expressing the need, the reinforcement of training and technical assistance in the field of false documents so as to create a network of African experts in this field.*
- *Considering, through heightened cooperation at regional and inter-regional level, the creation of regional offices to counter documentary fraud.*
- *Improving the provision of information to African and European countries about the characteristics of their respective travel documents by providing specimens.*
- *Encouraging the exchange of information on false travel documents.*

Rabat Process, Paris Cooperation Programme

Civil status registries are registries containing information on the civil status of a person (name, citizenship, marital status, date, place and State of birth, sex, etc.) which is presumed to be true and considered as a valid and legal proof of status when issuing birth, marriage or death certificates, travel documents, and other information inducted by (a change in) civil status, e.g. divorce, change of name, adoption, recognition of paternity, legal capacity of a natural person, etc.

Accurate and secure civil status registries are necessary to guarantee the proper identification of a person and are therefore also essential to border management. Besides passport issuances and border control, identity plays a central role in other aspects of migration management: family members have to be identified when it comes to family reunification; nationality must be certified for the return of an irregular migrant; and a person's identity must be proved and documented to benefit from a specific status, such as that of an asylum seeker or refugee, and for obtaining a valid residence permit or





naturalisation.

Civil registration, finally, plays a relevant role in the prevention and avoidance of statelessness, in particular through birth registration, and acknowledges the right to a nationality and the rights derived from it. Beyond the management of international mobility, civil registries are indeed essential to support access to economic, social and political rights, notably through the delivery of public administration services: electoral processes, the judicial system, the provision of public health and education, statistics, protection of women and children from exploitation, etc.

Setting up National Identification Systems that provide reliable identification documents to all implies effective legislative framework, well trained staff, security measures regarding data and document storage, control mechanisms, and efficient inter-agency cooperation providing exchange mechanisms.

Objective

The meeting will address the issue of civil registration and document fraud in an international mobility framework, giving particular attention to the following issues:

1. Extension of registration to all individuals.
2. Security of issuance processes for documents.
3. International cooperation and exchange of information in civil status matters.

The overall objective of the meeting will be:

- To exchange experiences and best practices.
- To formulate proposals for transnational cooperation in strengthening capacities and exchanging information.

Methodology

The meeting will proceed as follows:

- An introductory session will present the issue of sound civil registries in Europe and Africa, their importance within migration management systems, and other cross-cutting areas.
- A second session will address how to develop civil registration and ensure universal access, with a particular focus on the issues of birth registration and the registration of forcibly displaced persons.
- A third session will address the issue of fraud related to the issuance of documents (passports, national identity cards, certificate of citizenship, extracts from register of births, etc.) and the legal and technical measures that can be implemented to prevent it.
- A fourth session will address the issue of international cooperation among relevant





administrations working on civil status and documentary fraud.

- A fifth session will see recommendations debated to feed the conclusions of the co-presidencies.

Guidelines for the sessions will be distributed to the participants prior to the meeting. During the sessions, speakers from States and International Organisations will identify needs and gaps, and present good practices. The questions and topics presented will aim at stimulating debate and the sharing of experiences, national practices and lessons learnt among participating countries.

Member States of the Rabat Process in Africa are requested to provide the following information sent to the following email address rabatprocess@icmpd.org:

1. What are the competent authorities for civil status management in your country (*i.a. civil status registers, citizenship register, register for ID cards*)?
2. Please specify which laws regulate civil registration and its related areas (*i.e. is there a specific law on civil registry and does this law regulate registration of all facts on civil status- also death and marriage*)?
3. What are the bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements in which your State participates (*i.e. bilateral / multilateral agreements on exchange of data on civil status and citizenship, membership of international treaties addressing statelessness, etc.*)
4. Does your country make use of biometric identifiers in securing travel and/or identity documents? Has your country been doing so in the framework of bilateral/ multilateral cooperation with international partners?
5. Is your country currently benefiting from the support of partner states or international organisations in developing its national system of civil registration?
6. Please specify which are the most urgent needs in your country to improve civil registration (*e.g. development of legislation; training of staff; late registration of births; system of registration of deaths of natural persons; software for IT supported system of civil registry etc.*)

