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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Use of digital technologies to achieve universal birth registration

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Summary

The present study was submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 52/25. It examines efforts to achieve universal birth registration through digital technologies; best practices, challenges and opportunities; and potential mechanisms to close the gap between the number of children whose births are reported as registered and those who actually have a birth certificate.

In the study, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights highlights the systemic and structural barriers that children and their parents and caregivers face in accessing birth registration and birth certificates, and provides recommendations to States and the private sector on adopting a children's rights-based approach to universal birth registration.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/25, the Human Rights Council requested the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with States, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, to prepare a comprehensive study on the use of digital technologies to achieve universal birth registration, its best practices, challenges and opportunities, and potential mechanisms to close the gap between the number of children whose births are reported as registered and those who actually have a birth certificate, and to submit the report thereon to the Council at its fifty-eighth session.
2. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) solicited contributions and received 66 responses from States, national human rights institutions and other statutory bodies, United Nations entities and civil society.¹
3. The present study builds on the work of OHCHR on birth registration and digital spaces.² In it, the High Commissioner examines systemic and structural barriers to birth registration for children and their parents and caregivers, including challenges in supply and demand and digitalization, and outlines a model for achieving birth registration and certification for every child, including through safe, inclusive, innovative and cost-effective digitalization.

II. Birth registration

4. Birth registration is a human right that serves as a gateway to other rights (see paras. 14 and 15 below). It is the official means of recording a child's existence and of establishing a legal identity. The fulfilment of the right to be registered at birth is essential for respecting, protecting and fulfilling all human rights, including equality and non-discrimination, nationality, education and health.
5. Birth registration is the continuous, permanent, compulsory and universal recording within a comprehensive civil registration and vital statistics system³ of the occurrence and characteristics of birth, in accordance with national legal requirements. It involves three interrelated processes: (a) the declaration of the birth to civil registrars; (b) the official recording of the birth by civil registrars; and (c) the issuance of a birth certificate as proof of registration.⁴
6. Registration should include the individual's name, sex, date and place of birth and, where possible, parents' names, ages or dates of birth and address. A birth certificate represents the most visible evidence of the State's legal recognition of a child and should be issued immediately. Birth registration processes should be free, simple and easily accessible and the first certificate should also be free. In the present study, references to birth registration include certificates, unless stated otherwise.
7. Birth registration is critical for the protection of children's rights. Unregistered children or children lacking a birth certificate face a higher risk of exclusion, child, early and forced marriage, child labour, child recruitment, and trafficking.⁵ Birth registration is also instrumental in preventing and reducing statelessness and protecting stateless children.⁶
8. Birth certificates are often required to prove age and identity and to access essential services, including national identity credentials, education, healthcare, social protection, child protection and justice. A lack of registration and certification may cause lifelong

¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/call-inputs-universal-birth-registration-and-use-digital-technologies>.

² See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/children/birth-registration>; and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/digital-space-and-human-rights>.

³ For more about birth registration and vital statistics, see A/HRC/33/22.

⁴ A/HRC/27/22, paras. 4 and 5.

⁵ Ibid., paras. 17–43.

⁶ See <https://data.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/109697#:~:text=prevention%20of%20risks%20of%20statelessness&text=This%20is%20because%20birth%20registration,obtaining%20documentation%20that%20proves%20nationality>.

challenges, including preventing access to work, travel and full and equal participation in society, including voting. When children are not systematically registered at birth, they may go uncounted in statistics and unseen by government services, excluding them from planning and programming. This context puts them in a situation of vulnerability and may also result in protection gaps and other human rights violations.⁷

9. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in 2024, 20 per cent of children under the age of 5 globally – 150 million children – had never had their births recorded. In addition, there are about 55 million children under the age of 5 whose births are registered but who lack a birth certificate. Put together, this means that 3 in 10 children worldwide lack a birth certificate. Newborn registration is even lower: approximately 37 million babies under the age of 1 are unregistered and 16 million are registered but do not have a birth certificate.⁸

10. Overall, birth registration has increased and the gap between children in the poorest and richest countries has narrowed. However, progress would need to occur at five times the rate of the past decade to achieve universal coverage by 2030.⁹ Several countries around the world need to further strengthen their targeted strategies to reach children facing intersecting discrimination due to their particular situation, such as migrant, displaced, stateless or Indigenous children, to ensure that all are registered and provided with birth certificates.

11. Many States have started adopting comprehensive digital identity systems, including civil registration and vital statistics systems. Digital technologies have the potential to facilitate and improve birth registration. They can increase accessibility and efficiency, support systems integration for improved whole-of-government coordination and address financial barriers. However, the ad hoc and unsustainable use of technologies is counterproductive, increases exclusion and limits the enjoyment of human rights. The human rights challenges of digital public infrastructure, including data protection, privacy, exclusion, accessibility and the potential misuse of records for surveillance or other purposes, are well documented.¹⁰ Furthermore, digital technologies may risk failure when civil registration and vital statistics systems are already struggling.

12. A hybrid and inclusive approach to birth registration, including using digital technologies as appropriate and with necessary safeguards, has the potential to transform children’s lives.

III. Legal and institutional framework related to birth registration

13. International human rights law provides a comprehensive and robust normative framework with legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil children’s rights, including the right to be registered immediately after birth and to be recognized as a person before the law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 6) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 16) state that everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

14. Birth registration is a key element in recognition before the law in many domestic systems and is essential for the enjoyment and exercise of a wide range of human rights. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 7) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 24) set out the rights of children to be registered immediately after birth, to have a name and to acquire a nationality. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 7) further provides that all children have, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by their parents. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 15) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (art. 5 (d) (iii)) also establish that everyone has the right to a nationality. The Universal Declaration of Human

⁷ [A/HRC/33/22](#), para. 31.

⁸ UNICEF, “The right start in life: global levels and trends in birth registration – 2024 update” (New York, 2024), pp. 6 and 8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰ [A/74/821](#), paras. 42–52; and [A/HRC/43/29](#), paras. 31 and 33–36.

Rights (art. 15) also affirms that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of nationality or denied the right to change nationality.

15. Birth registration and legal identity are further reflected in the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (art. 29) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (art. 18). Under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men concerning their children's nationality (art. 9 (2)).

16. The lack of civil registration and related documentation makes persons vulnerable to statelessness and associated protection risks, and birth registration is often essential to the reduction and prevention of statelessness.¹¹ Further, under action 7 of the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024, States are called upon to ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness. States should ensure the implementation of these rights in line with international human rights law, including where the child would otherwise be stateless.¹²

17. Public institutions responsible for birth registration and related public policies should make children's best interests a primary consideration in all actions affecting them.¹³

18. States must fulfil the right to birth registration without discrimination based on the child's or parents' or caregivers' race, colour, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, nationality or lack thereof, or migration or other status. The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Committee on the Rights of the Child have urged States Parties to their relevant Conventions to take all measures necessary to ensure that all children are immediately registered at birth and issued birth certificates, irrespective of their migration status or that of their parents.¹⁴ When a child is illegally deprived of some or all elements of their identity, States shall provide appropriate assistance and protection, with a view to speedily reestablishing identity.¹⁵

19. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended that States Parties take all measures necessary to ensure that all children are registered at birth through a universal, well-managed, accessible and free registration system. Such systems must be flexible and responsive to family circumstances.¹⁶ It has also recommended that States Parties promote the use of digital identification systems that enable all newborns to have their birth registered and officially recognized.¹⁷

20. United Nations human rights mechanisms have provided recommendations on a human rights-based approach to birth registration and to using digital technologies.¹⁸ The Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants highlighted the links between non-registration and unsafe migration, access to rights and increased risk of statelessness, calling for universal birth registration.¹⁹ However, the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty

¹¹ [A/AC.96/1132](#), para. 13. See also the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, arts. 1–6; and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, arts. 25 and 27.

¹² Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 7 (2).

¹³ *Ibid.*, art. 3 (1); and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, para. 26.

¹⁴ Joint general comment No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) on State obligations regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration in countries of origin, transit, destination and return, paras. 20 and 21.

¹⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 8.

¹⁶ General comment No. 7 (2020) on implementing children's rights in early childhood, para. 24.

¹⁷ General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, para. 79.

¹⁸ See Human Rights Council resolutions 28/13, 34/15 and 52/25; Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 7 (2020) and general comment No. 25 (2021); Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 17 (1989) on the rights of the child; [CRC/C/AUS/CO/5-6](#), para. 23; [CRC/C/EGY/CO/5-6](#), para. 19; [CRC/C/NAM/CO/4-6](#), para. 20; and [CRC/C/GTM/CO/7](#), para. 21.

¹⁹ [A/79/213](#), paras. 40 and 58 (o).

and human rights expressed concerns about the human rights implications of the digital welfare state, including birth registration.²⁰

21. Digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics involves private actors. In line with the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, businesses involved in digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics should avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts and should address those impacts with which they are involved. All companies are expected to conduct human rights due diligence, which is crucial to show that technology products, policies, practices and terms of service respect human rights law, including children's rights.²¹ The Children's Rights and Business Principles further guide companies on how best to approach children's rights and integrate them into their operations.

22. Target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals is to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030. Birth registration is integral to other Goals, especially those on zero poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, education, gender equality, reducing poverty and inequalities, and decent work.

23. The growing prioritization of birth registration, legal identity and digital technologies has led to multiple initiatives, frameworks and policy guidance. These include the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, which established a coordinated, comprehensive approach to legal identity, and the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda Task Force, an inter-agency mechanism to support the Agenda's implementation that has issued guidance on civil and birth registration.

IV. Barriers to universal birth registration

24. Children and their parents or caregivers face complex and multifaceted barriers to birth registration, including discriminatory laws, policies and practices, affordability and accessibility barriers, and a lack of measures to support the implementation of birth registration, limiting children's rights and potential. Many barriers have been widely documented, including by OHCHR, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.²² The present section contains a review of barriers in the current implementation context and an exploration of human rights challenges related to digitalization.

A. Discriminatory laws, policies and practices

25. Intersecting forms of discrimination affect children's access to birth registration and present additional challenges to birth registration. Children who experience such discrimination include internally displaced, refugee, migrant, asylum-seeking and stateless children, Indigenous children and children from minority groups, children in street situations, LGBTI+ children, children in rural and remote areas, children in alternative care, children living in poverty and children whose parents lack official documentation due to migration status or missing, blocked or withheld documentation. Such vulnerabilities are often compounded in emergency situations.

26. De facto discrimination continues to hinder universal coverage and perpetuates inequities, even in countries with robust laws and systems, due to biases, systemic exclusion of marginalized communities and arbitrary, inconsistent and discriminatory implementation. For example, in Nepal, only 15 per cent of children aged under 5 in the Dalit community have birth certificates.²³

²⁰ See [A/74/493](#).

²¹ See also the [Road Map for Digital Cooperation](#).

²² See [A/HRC/27/22](#); [A/HRC/33/22](#); [A/HRC/39/30](#); UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030: Are we on track?" (New York, 2019); <https://data.unicef.org>; and UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration" (UNHCR, 2021).

²³ Sharad K. Sharma and others, "Birth registration in Nepal: an assessment of progress based on two national surveys", *PLOS Global Health*, vol. 3, No. 1 (January 2023).

27. In countries where legal and policy frameworks are outdated, insufficient or not consistently enforced or do not exist, individuals have limited access to registration or are excluded from it. Children can be excluded due to their parents' or caregivers' situation, for example on the basis of their migration status or if their identity documents are missing, blocked or withheld.²⁴

28. Gender-based discrimination in civil registration and nationality laws remains an obstacle to universal birth registration. In multiple countries, women are excluded from registering their child's birth, unless in exceptional circumstances.²⁵ Single mothers, women in unregistered marriages, including religious, customary or polygamous marriages,²⁶ women who do not have a marriage certificate²⁷ and women who require proof that the child was born in wedlock, or authorization of the father,²⁸ often face legal or procedural barriers. Some countries continue to allow only fathers or male relatives to register births, or require them to be present with the mother.²⁹ This poses challenges for children born out of wedlock or as a result of rape.³⁰ In certain settings, mothers can only register a birth if the father cannot attend due to illness, death or other reasons.³¹ In countries where extramarital sexual relations are criminalized, parents and caregivers may avoid birth registration to escape legal repercussions.³² Lastly, in some countries, women cannot transmit their nationality to their children, irrespective of the father's nationality.³³

29. Cultural and social norms concerning unmarried or single mothers, or children born of rape, affect registration and subject children to stigma. This may prevent mothers from registering their child's birth to avoid isolation, bullying or exclusion, further marginalizing the child.³⁴ Same-sex couples also face discrimination in law and in practice and cannot register their child's birth.³⁵

30. Age-based barriers affect birth registration for those parents who are children themselves and for children who wish to register their own births later, independently. For example, some jurisdictions (e.g. Ecuador) require parents to be 18 to register a birth or a guardian or legal representative's presence if aged under 18.³⁶ Furthermore, civil registry officials must report adolescent mothers to the prosecutor in some countries.³⁷ In some cases, children who were not registered at birth and wish to apply independently for late registration require parental or caregiver support. Most States members of the European Union do not provide for late birth registration if not done by parents.³⁸ Furthermore, some children, including children in street situations, are not in contact with their parents or caregivers, yet, some jurisdictions require parental or guardian consent.³⁹ Such provisions, or lack thereof, can deter individuals for fear of legal consequences or stigma or can prevent registration due to the absence of a guardian, legal representative or other supporting adult.

²⁴ See, for example, High Court of South Africa, *P.P.M and Others v. Minister of Home Affairs and Others*, Case No. 14238/21, Judgment, 16 January 2024.

²⁵ For more analysis, see [A/HRC/27/22](#); [A/HRC/33/22](#); [A/HRC/39/30](#); and UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration".

²⁶ UNICEF, "The right start in life", p. 11.

²⁷ Such as Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration", p. 10).

²⁸ Such as Bahrain, Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of) Jordan and the State of Palestine (ibid.).

²⁹ UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration", p. 8.

³⁰ [A/HRC/39/30](#), para. 18.

³¹ Such as Fiji, Eswatini and Oman (UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration", p. 9).

³² See UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration"; and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/wg-women-and-girls/criminalization-adultery-violation-womens-human-rights>.

³³ [CRC/C/KWT/CO/3-6](#), para. 21.

³⁴ UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration", p. 10.

³⁵ Submission from the Ombudsman for Children of Croatia.

³⁶ Submission from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ecuador.

³⁷ UNHCR and UNICEF, "Background note on sex discrimination in birth registration", p. 12.

³⁸ See <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/mapping-minimum-age-requirements/applying-birth-registration>.

³⁹ Submission from the Consortium for Street Children and others.

31. Birth registration is integral to preventing statelessness, identifying stateless children or children with unclear nationality status, and enabling access to rights. Individuals including migrants, refugees (in particular those born outside their country of origin), internally displaced persons, nomadic populations, children born to parents from different countries and members of groups not recognized by the authorities may be at risk of statelessness if they cannot prove their links to a State. Children are at risk of statelessness in countries where women cannot confer their nationality to their children, particularly if the father is absent or does not acknowledge the child. Birth registration is crucial to children's right to a nationality, documents their place of birth and details of their parents, and provides evidence as to whether they can acquire citizenship through place of birth and/or descent.⁴⁰

32. In some instances, children and their parents or caregivers living as non-nationals face barriers in law, in policy and in practice to registering births in the country of birth. For instance, the Republic of Korea does not allow birth registration for non-national children born there.⁴¹

33. Registration of children's births with the authorities of their parents' country of nationality may be difficult due to ineligibility or fear of persecution, as in the case of periodic suspensions of birth registration for children born in refugee camps,⁴² and the de facto policy of not issuing birth certificates to minorities.⁴³ Such groups of populations may not have legal residency status, despite long-term presence in the country. The parents of children who have not been registered before fleeing their country of origin cannot contact the authorities to register births or obtain birth certificates. In host countries where legal and procedural frameworks are inadequate, refugee children born outside the host country may be left without birth registration or an official (substitute) birth certificate. States that require legal residency for birth registration can prevent undocumented migrants, displaced and stateless populations from obtaining residence permits.

B. Affordability and accessibility

34. Multiple structural and logistical barriers prevent access to birth registration. These include physical accessibility, geographical disparities and lack of decentralized services; inadequate human, financial and technical resourcing of civil registration and vital statistics systems; and administrative inefficiencies, such as complex procedures, excessive documentation requirements and the need for multiple visits. Individuals from marginalized groups may face de facto discrimination as a result of greater burdens in providing documentation or the need to navigate complex bureaucratic processes or overcome language barriers. Further concerns include fear of legal consequences, particularly for migrants and parents of children born out of wedlock; low literacy rates; and digital issues, including digital illiteracy, connectivity and the accessibility of digital services for persons with disabilities.⁴⁴

35. Children in rural and remote areas and nomadic populations lack equal access to civil registration and vital statistics offices. An analysis of 77 countries, one third of which were low-income countries, found higher registration rates of children in urban areas in 80 per cent

⁴⁰ A/HRC/27/22, paras. 23 and 24.

⁴¹ UNHCR, "UNHCR comments on the proposals on birth registration of foreign children in the Republic of Korea"; and submission from the Republic of Korea.

⁴² ACAPS, "Bangladesh: impact of the suspension of birth registration on the host community in Cox's Bazar" (3 August 2021).

⁴³ Christoph Sperfeldt, "Legal identity and minority statelessness in Cambodia: recent developments", *Stateless and Citizenship Review*, vol. 3, No. 2 (2021).

⁴⁴ See A/HRC/27/22; A/HRC/33/22; A/HRC/39/30; UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030"; and submissions from the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, ATD Fourth World and Access Now.

of countries.⁴⁵ Globally, children in urban areas are approximately 30 per cent more likely to be registered than those in rural areas.⁴⁶

36. Costs associated with civil registration significantly affect equal access to birth registration, particularly in low- and middle-income countries and marginalized communities. These costs can include official registration fees, late and delayed registration fees and fines, and unofficial or illegal fees imposed by registrars.^{47,48} Additional financial barriers include transportation to registration offices, income loss from time off work, fees for prerequisite documents and denial of registration if parents cannot pay medical delivery fees.

37. Children from the poorest 20 per cent of families worldwide are 25 per cent less likely to be registered than those from the wealthiest 20 per cent. This disparity varies between and within regions.⁴⁹

38. Linguistic and cultural barriers and practices can hinder access to birth registration, especially for Indigenous, minority, nomadic and asylum-seeking, migrant and refugee populations. Forms, resources and processes are not always culturally sensitive, inclusive or available in relevant languages.⁵⁰ Furthermore, institutional processes may not treat all children equally. Children from specific ethnic or religious groups can face direct restrictions through legislation and policy or indirectly in practice.⁵¹ For example, children born in Hungary who are citizens must have a name that is listed in the official names register. If a proposed name is not in the register, it creates a temporary barrier until it is either accepted or rejected.⁵²

39. Birth registration rates are lower in some ethnic and religious groups compared with the national average, including as a result of traditional or cultural customs affecting uptake, marginalization or lack of institutional recognition. For example, a lack of registration persists among children from Roma and Dalit communities and Indigenous children.⁵³

C. Lack of broader measures to ensure birth registration

40. The right to birth registration, the registration process, its significance and its benefits are often not widely known or understood, posing a barrier to universal coverage. Limited awareness continues to hinder access, in particular among groups in vulnerable situations, for whom birth registration may be perceived as a secondary concern in the face of more immediate challenges. In 51 countries with available data, 53 per cent of mothers or caregivers of unregistered children did not know how to register their child's birth. The other 47 per cent knew of the process but faced other barriers. These include traditional customs that may not promote formal birth registration and lack of knowledge of human rights and how to claim them. Disparities in birth registration rates are closely linked to mothers' educational level. Globally, 83 per cent of children aged under 5 whose mothers have at least secondary education are registered, compared with 66 per cent of children whose mothers have no formal education.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ UNICEF, "Advantage or paradox?: The challenge for children and young people of growing up urban" (New York, 2018).

⁴⁶ UNICEF, "The right start in life", p. 11.

⁴⁷ See [A/HRC/33/22](#); and UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030", p. 25.

⁴⁸ Data provided by UNICEF. Several countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mozambique, Pakistan and Rwanda, charge for the first copy of birth certificates. Late and/or delayed registration fees exist in countries such as Eswatini, Ghana, Honduras, India, Kenya, Malaysia, the Niger, the Philippines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zambia.

⁴⁹ UNICEF, "The right start in life", p. 11.

⁵⁰ [A/HRC/39/30](#), para. 24. See also [CCPR/C/142/D/3602/2019](#).

⁵¹ UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030", p. 24.

⁵² Submission from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of Hungary. Names are normally refused if offensive, insulting, incompatible with grammatical rules, or nicknames.

⁵³ [A/HRC/33/22](#), para. 12; UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030", p. 25; and submissions from the [Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent](#).

⁵⁴ UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030".

41. Government departments, public authorities and service providers responsible for birth registration often lack integrated systems and coordination in information-sharing, design, implementation and monitoring.⁵⁵ That affects related services such as healthcare, social protection and education. This lack of integration and interoperability can result in incoherent and sometimes duplicated approaches, policies, systems and processes, and hinder effective implementation of civil registration.

42. The requirement for parents to present national identification documents for their children's birth registration is a significant barrier. In countries where national identification documents are only issued at the age of 18, young mothers may be excluded due to a lack of alternative documentation. Moreover, the expiry of national identification documents can delay timely registration, as parents may not have a valid identification for the registration process.⁵⁶

43. Factors causing a “drop-off” between registration and certification in several countries include the inability to do both in one visit, additional validation or scrutiny checks at the certification stage, and the requirement to pay for the first certificate issued, including at other locations.⁵⁷

44. Emergency situations, such as armed conflicts, humanitarian situations, natural disasters, large-scale epidemics and pandemics, significantly disrupt civil registration and vital statistics systems due to the loss and destruction of documents, disrupted service delivery, restrictions on movement and the exclusion of groups through laws or policies. Existing barriers are also compounded in such contexts. Re-establishing systems and establishing “catch-up” mechanisms is time-consuming, complex and expensive and may require legal and policy reforms.⁵⁸

D. Digitalization

45. While public infrastructure and governance mechanisms are increasingly digitalized, 2.6 billion people – one third of the world's population – remain offline. There is a stark disparity between high- and low-income countries, with 93 per cent of the population in high-income countries and 27 per cent in low-income countries having access to the Internet. On average, connectivity is lower in least developed countries and landlocked developing countries,⁵⁹ with the divide exacerbated in rural or remote areas, among people living in poverty and in emergency settings.

46. As States, with the support of the private sector, move towards the digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics systems, multiple human rights challenges arise, which can be further pronounced with the parallel digitalization of identification systems. Extensive data collection poses risks to the right to privacy and, by extension, to other rights, as well as to data security. If biometric data are included, the harms of breaches can be irreparable.⁶⁰ While enhanced interoperability between government systems may improve access to services by linking individual records across disparate data registers, ensuring that children have access to essential services, it also carries the risk of misuse, unauthorized access and breaches of privacy. It may enable tracking and monitoring of individuals without legal justification and result in unlawful or arbitrary interference with the right to privacy. Privacy interference and the digitalization of public infrastructure raise concerns, including the risk of surveillance through mission creep in the operation of systems without accountability for the use of data.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/DPI-Safeguards.pdf>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See UNICEF, “Civil registration in humanitarian contexts: recommendations and operational guidelines for African Union member States”.

⁵⁹ See <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/2024/11/10/ff24-internet-use/>.

⁶⁰ A/HRC/43/29, para. 34. See also submission from Access Now.

⁶¹ See A/74/493, A/HRC/39/29, A/HRC/43/29 and A/HRC/48/31. See also submission from Access Now.

47. Digitalization also poses the risk of exclusion, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations, who may lack digital access and may not be digitally literate, or because of system design, modes of implementation and pre-existing discriminatory laws and policies.⁶² This may result in targeted discrimination, exploitation and the exclusion of groups in vulnerable situations from birth registration.

48. Contrary to the need for coherent and sustainable implementation of civil registration and vital statistics systems, donors may support specific digital platforms or only provide funding for the initial phase of the implementation, neglecting long-term operations. This approach, together with other factors, may cause States to become dependent on specific technologies through vendor lock-in. Changes in donor or donor priorities can further result in platform changes and increased costs. Consequently, States may end up with multiple, fragmented digital platforms that are unsustainable, incompatible, costly and not aligned with context-specific needs. This fragmentation leads to inconsistent implementation and delays in issuing legal identity documents and decreases trust in the system.⁶³ In addition, disproportionate and disjointed investments in digitalization can shift costs to clients, including through increased fees or conditional requirements. New digital identity management systems that are not built on birth registration systems may undermine the effectiveness of birth registration through creating a parallel identification system. Furthermore, these systems can detract from the importance of birth registration and divert essential funds away from universal birth registration.⁶⁴

49. Further challenges associated with digitalization include the introduction of additional steps and validation requirements, which can overwhelm individuals and cause delays. For groups in vulnerable situations, these additional steps can disproportionately affect access to services, leading to further exclusion and delays in obtaining critical documents.

V. Model for achieving birth registration for every child

50. Universal birth registration is integral to a lifecycle approach to legal identity and sets children on a path to lifelong enjoyment of human rights. States and the private sector should implement a children's rights-based approach, placing children's rights and States' legal obligations at the centre of all laws, policies, practices and programmes concerning birth registration. While birth registration systems should be adapted to each country's and community's specific social, economic, cultural and political contexts, the core elements of a children's rights-based approach apply to all States and settings.

A. Ensuring inclusivity

51. Birth registration systems should be non-discriminatory: all children should have equal access to birth registration and legal identity.⁶⁵ Systems that are inclusive, equitable, adaptable and tailored to children's specific needs and situations remove barriers to registration, increase access for all children, including the most marginalized, and contribute to their lifelong participation in society.

52. States should remove direct and indirect barriers that exclude children from birth registration in law, policy and practice. That can be achieved by reforming laws or policies excluding children due to the child's or parents' or caregivers' age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language or migration, disability, socioeconomic or other status, or due to birth out of wedlock.⁶⁶ Children should be registered regardless of their parents' status or documentation, including in migration settings.⁶⁷ To prevent discrimination, birth certificates

⁶² A/HRC/43/29, para. 33; See also <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/UNCT-Guidelines.pdf>; and submission from Access Now.

⁶³ <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/DPI-Safeguards.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Submission from Human Rights for Digital Identity Coalition.

⁶⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child, arts. 2 and 7.

⁶⁶ Ibid., art. 2.

⁶⁷ See joint general comment No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017).

should exclude sensitive details, such as children's or parents' or caregivers' nationality or migration status, and contain the minimum information necessary to uphold rights: first and last name, date and place of birth, sex and, where possible, parents' names, ages and address.⁶⁸ All data and information collected through birth registration systems – both digital and traditional – must remain confidential to protect children and their families. Digital and traditional systems should also be protected by firewalls to prevent immigration enforcement authorities from accessing information about individuals' status.

53. Specific attention is required for those furthest behind, including marginalized groups, internally displaced, refugee, migrant, asylum-seeking and stateless children, Indigenous children, children living in poverty and children in rural or remote areas, as well as children born outside formal health facilities. This approach requires specific, targeted interventions and can include mobile registration units, expanding systems to include excluded populations and culturally inclusive designs. In Mexico, birth registration brigades make annual visits to municipalities where more than 50 per cent of the population lives in Indigenous households.⁶⁹

54. Transparent, disaggregated data on children and birth registration, covering all grounds of discrimination prohibited under human rights law, are fundamental in establishing comprehensive and transparent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to analyse birth registration systems, identify gaps and inform evidence-based legislation and policymaking, and ensure inclusive systems. That could include children's rights impact assessments and evaluations in legislative, policy and programme design.⁷⁰

B. Accessibility and affordability

55. Achieving universal birth registration requires reducing or eliminating financial and access barriers for children and parents and caregivers. Registration should be completely free.⁷¹ This widens access and helps break intergenerational poverty.⁷² All registration fees should be removed, the first copy of birth certificates should be free and fees or penalties for late registration for unregistered older children and adults should be eliminated. Birth registration is free in numerous countries.⁷³

56. All children and parents and caregivers require direct access to birth registration services, certificates and information about the process. Combining registration and certification into a single, easily accessible process, which streamlines late registrations, will significantly enhance coverage.⁷⁴ This involves designing and implementing accessible systems with both in-person and digital access means, removing structural and logistical barriers and streamlining administrative processes, for example, by providing simplified information and forms in all relevant languages. Systems should be well financed and resourced and have sufficient, well-trained staff who service them.

57. Ensuring equitable access to registration for underserved, "hard-to-reach" and rural populations and persons living in poverty through mobile platforms, offline solutions and community-based approaches is essential.⁷⁵ Mobile registration units have successfully targeted areas with low registration rates in rural Australia, Bolivia (Plurinational State of),

⁶⁸ Human Rights Council resolution 52/25, para. 5 (h).

⁶⁹ Submission from Mexico.

⁷⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 4. See also <https://enoc.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ENOC-2020-Position-Statement-on-CRIA-FV-1.pdf>.

⁷¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 7 (2020), para. 24.

⁷² UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child", p. 34.

⁷³ Birth registration, including late and delayed registration, is free in numerous countries worldwide, for example: Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Botswana, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Mongolia, Nigeria, Panama, Sri Lanka, Türkiye and Turkmenistan (data provided by UNICEF).

⁷⁴ UNICEF, "The right start in life", p. 24.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Cambodia, Ghana, the Philippines and Timor-Leste.⁷⁶ Colombia reported providing free mobile birth registration and identification services in priority areas to increase access for populations in vulnerable situations access, prevent statelessness among children of Venezuelan parents and reduce pressure on offices.⁷⁷

58. Decentralization is key to improving the accessibility and availability of birth registration by establishing services in community, local authority, health, social welfare or education centres and mobile units to reach remote, rural, marginalized or displaced communities. It brings birth registration services closer to the community, reduces the need for travel and increases the visibility of birth registration. For instance, the United Republic of Tanzania decentralized birth registration by creating a “one-stop” system, enabling parents to register births, get their children immunized and access nutrition services. Birth registration increased from 10 per cent in 1999 to over 60 per cent in 2022.⁷⁸

59. Enabling community focal points, such as local authority figures, religious leaders or elders, to register or facilitate registration of births, can support universal coverage and build trust in and promote birth registration. In Cameroon, a 2024 campaign supported by UNICEF and the Government to empower mayors as civil registration champions involved creating communal roadmaps targeting local needs, in line with a national road map.⁷⁹ In Honduras, 14 satellite registration offices were created in remote municipalities with mainly Indigenous populations, facilitating access and helping build trust.⁸⁰

C. Whole-of-government approach

60. A multidisciplinary integrated systems approach to civil registration and vital statistics, including birth registration, is key to ensure universal, inclusive and effective birth registration. Integrated systems require effective governance, multisectoral collaboration and clear, transparent data- and information-sharing. That facilitates accuracy and efficiency and supports consistent implementation of human rights obligations. Streamlining processes into a “one-step, one-visit” system allows registration and certification to happen simultaneously, reducing obstacles and facilitating universal registration. After birth registration, the data recorded can be shared across all relevant sectors, ensuring one coherent dataset per person in the integrated system. This involves standardizing data-recording methods across core sectors to streamline information and data collection and ensure coherency. Bangladesh, for example, has standardized data standards across sectors.⁸¹

61. Linking civil registration and vital statistics, the population register and national identification systems is central to an integrated civil registration and vital statistics and lifecycle approach to legal identity.⁸² Structural and functional integration of civil registration and vital statistics and national identification systems from birth requires strong, effectively enforced legal frameworks protecting and advancing human rights. This includes data protection safeguards to govern data-sharing and effective measures to prevent exclusion and discrimination, especially of non-citizens, refugees and stateless persons.⁸³ Some States require national identification for birth registration, which can hinder registration due to often incomplete identification coverage. Alternative documents, including birth certificates or testimony of habitual residence, should be accepted to ensure access for young mothers where

⁷⁶ Submission from the Castan Centre; Will Winter, “The Minimbah Project: facilitating birth registration and birth certificates in rural and regional communities”, in *Proof of Birth*, Melissa Castan and Paula Gerber, eds. (Future Leaders, 2015); and Claire Cody, *Count Every Child: The Right to Birth Registration* (Woking, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Plan Ltd., 2009), p. 45.

⁷⁷ Submission from Colombia.

⁷⁸ UNICEF, “The right start in life”, p. 15.

⁷⁹ Submission from Child Identity Protection.

⁸⁰ Submission from Castan Centre.

⁸¹ See <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/DPI-Safeguards.pdf>.

⁸² See https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Handbooks/crvs/CRVS_GOLF_Final-E.pdf; and https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/UNCT_Guidelines.pdf.

⁸³ UNICEF, “The right start in life”, p. 24.

national identification documents are issued at 18. Such documents should have lifelong validity.

62. Healthcare services have multiple entry points to promote timely and efficient birth registration, including maternity wards, immunization services and community health interventions.⁸⁴ In Guinea, interoperability between the health and civil registration and vital statistics systems established civil registry corners in hospitals, significantly increasing registration.⁸⁵

63. Sectoral interoperability can facilitate the identification of unregistered children or children at risk of statelessness and the creation of routine mechanisms for catch-up registration. For instance, social service workers can register community births and social protection staff can identify and refer unregistered children and provide registration alongside other interventions. In Yemen, child protection and civil registration and vital statistics services and the Social Welfare Fund coordinate to deploy mobile teams that bring birth registration services directly to communities.⁸⁶

64. While access to education should not require a birth certificate or national identification document, entry into education is a key opportunity to establish coordinated, systematic processes between civil registration and vital statistics and educational authorities for routine identification and catch-up registration.⁸⁷ In Senegal in 2023, a protocol for detecting and registering pupils without birth certificates resulted in 50 per cent of unregistered children being registered through catch-up processes.⁸⁸

65. Other examples of multisectoral collaboration include a legal provision in India allowing delegation of birth registration responsibilities and, in Eswatini, the village chief can notify the registration officer of a birth. In 2022, over 150,000 children in Côte d'Ivoire were registered through a late registration process administered by the ministries of education, justice and the interior.⁸⁹

D. Ensuring community awareness and facilitating meaningful participation

66. Meaningful consultation with and the participation of individuals, including children, is key when designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating birth registration legislation, policies and programmes. This ensures that their lived experiences, needs and solutions can be reflected accurately and that birth registration systems reach all children and their families. Co-design with and the meaningful participation of rights holders also builds trust in the system and authorities.

67. Comprehensive, sustained and targeted awareness-raising and information outreach are integral to achieving universal coverage. They should be focused on the importance of birth registration and legal identity, the long-term legal, social and economic benefits thereof, and how to register. Communications and information must be age-appropriate, accessible, comprehensible and tailored to children, families and communities in all their diversity, especially those furthest behind. Various outreach methods should be considered, including radio, television, street plays, pamphlets, text messages, online campaigns and community training sessions. Outreach through social protection, child protection, healthcare and education systems is essential. For instance, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania established clinics for mothers of children aged under 5 and pregnant women, where nurses inform them about birth registration.⁹⁰ In Nepal, an awareness-raising

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Sibylle Catherine Desjardins, "Des 'coins d'état-civil' pour favoriser l'enregistrement des naissances", UNICEF, 14 November 2022.

⁸⁶ UNICEF, "Reaching children with a holistic approach" (New York, 2023), p. 2.

⁸⁷ UNICEF, "The right start in life", p. 25

⁸⁸ Submission from Child Identity Protection.

⁸⁹ See <https://www.unicef.org/media/135841/file/Cote-d-Ivoire-2022-COAR.pdf>; and submission from Child Identity Protection.

⁹⁰ Submission from ATD Fourth World.

programme by the Government, UNICEF and Plan International included media campaigns in dialects, peer education, door-to-door visits, street dramas and registration through mobile health clinics. Birth registration rates increased from 42 per cent to 70 per cent.⁹¹

E. Promoting and protecting human rights in digitalized systems

68. Digital technologies can help make progress towards universal birth registration in multiple ways. They can facilitate timely, accurate and permanent record-keeping and quicker record transfer and retrieval, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and broaden access.⁹² Tools and devices, such as mobile communications, help reach unregistered children in remote areas by reducing geographical and financial barriers.⁹³ Digitalization of birth registration should empower people to seek and realize their right to birth registration. It should also enhance existing systems through improved, simplified processes, integrated systems and the phased integration of new functions. Monitoring and evaluation at each stage should guide developments to ensure inclusivity, efficiency and sustainability.⁹⁴

69. Human rights provide a framework for using digital technologies in birth registration, particularly the rights to privacy, non-discrimination and equality, participation, freedom of expression, access to information, and accountability. The principles of accessibility, availability, affordability, adaptability and quality provide clear guidance for the design of digital birth registration approaches. Rights restrictions associated with digital efforts, for example due to data collection, processing and sharing, must comply with the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality. States should conduct human rights due diligence, including regular, comprehensive human rights impact assessments and children's rights impact assessments when digitalizing civil registration and vital statistics systems.⁹⁵

70. Robust legislative and policy frameworks addressing digital protection and security, including privacy and data protection, grounded in human rights, are critical to ensure safe and inclusive digital technologies and to prevent unlawful or arbitrary surveillance and misuse of data. Such frameworks also enhance trust in digital technologies.⁹⁶ Effective data protection and data privacy frameworks with enforcement mechanisms are integral to safeguarding children's rights.⁹⁷ Thus, ensuring that data protection and privacy laws and systems are consistent with human rights is essential.⁹⁸ Such frameworks should be proportionate and ensure that personal data are collected, processed and stored securely, lawfully, with appropriate consent and only for the necessary purposes and time.⁹⁹ The data collected, processed and stored should be the minimum necessary to establish a legal identity and not include data that may lead to direct or indirect discrimination on any grounds of discrimination prohibited under human rights law.¹⁰⁰ Data should be shared only and used as necessary and in accordance with human rights safeguards to avoid surveillance, profiling or misuse.¹⁰¹

71. Data privacy safeguards and transparency are central to rights-respecting digital systems. States should ensure that digital or biometric identity programmes are designed, implemented and operated after appropriate human rights, technical, regulatory, legal and ethical safeguards are in place, and in line with international human rights law.¹⁰²

⁹¹ Sophie Shugg, "Plan International's birth registration program in Nepal" in *Proof of Birth*, Melissa Castan and Paula Gerber, eds. (Future Leaders, 2015). See also submission from Castan Centre.

⁹² See <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/DPI-Safeguards.pdf>.

⁹³ UNICEF, "Birth registration for every child by 2030", p. 25.

⁹⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/DPI-Safeguards.pdf>.

⁹⁵ See General Assembly resolution 78/213; A/HRC/48/31; and A/HRC/51/17

⁹⁶ A/74/821, para. 25.

⁹⁷ See A/HRC/46/37; and Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 25 (2021), paras. 67 and 68.

⁹⁸ A/74/821, para. 25.

⁹⁹ See A/77/196.

¹⁰⁰ See https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/UNCT_Guidelines.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Submission from Citizen Lab.

¹⁰² General Assembly resolution 78/213, para. 20 (d).

Independent oversight mechanisms with appropriate accountability mechanisms and strong enforcement of data protection laws are critical.¹⁰³

72. Digitalized identification systems must align with and complement existing streamlined civil registration and vital statistics processes. Successful digitalization is contingent on simplifying and streamlining processes before implementation and ensuring that a well-structured “one-stop” process for registration and certification exists.¹⁰⁴

73. A gradual, hybrid approach to digitalization is recommended as it can be adapted to each specific context. Digital birth registration efforts must be context-specific, taking into consideration the level of access to and use of digital tools by the population and Government in each location. For example, in urban areas, with robust, universal Internet connectivity, reliable electricity and trained personnel, birth registration can be made largely based on digital systems. In rural and remote areas, where digitalization may lag more broadly, paper-based systems should remain, with a long-term view to gradual digitalization. States should consolidate existing digital systems and develop comprehensive scale-up plans before digitalizing further.¹⁰⁵

74. Digitalization of birth registration should form part of broader government-led e-governance processes, aligned with human rights standards. Financing of digitalization of civil registration and vital statistics should include both initial setup and sustainable maintenance through national budgets. States should prioritize open-source solutions and agreements that guarantee long-term sustainable and adaptable systems and avoid States becoming dependent on one specific technology provider. Service providers should follow and support government strategies and priorities. Defining clear roles, responsibilities and safeguards against data breaches and unauthorized access is essential.^{106,107}

F. Emergency settings

75. With 24 per cent of the world living in fragile contexts and 460 million children in conflict settings,¹⁰⁸ ensuring continued birth registration in emergencies is essential to protecting children’s rights. Integrating civil registration and vital statistics with emergency response and other relevant sectors prevents children from being overlooked. For instance, newborns and new mothers face intersecting challenges in emergencies.¹⁰⁹ An integrated systems approach would allow for a timely identification and response to their needs. Civil registration and vital statistics systems must be flexible and operationally adaptable in emergencies.

76. States should implement temporary and emergency measures, such as introducing or scaling up existing mobile registration units; simplified procedures, including flexibility around the presence of parents, evidentiary requirements and verification modes; and preserving records. Issuing handwritten birth certificates consistent with an existing template that can be recognized and integrated into the system at a later stage to provide uninterrupted services is important. Furthermore, registering children in non-government-controlled territory, including through simplified processes, should be considered. Civil registration

¹⁰³ A/HRC/39/29, para. 33; and submission from Citizen Lab.

¹⁰⁴ See <https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/DPI-Safeguards.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ See https://unstats.un.org/legal-identity-agenda/documents/Paper/CRVS_Key%20Findings_for_Practitioners.pdf; and submission from Access Now.

¹⁰⁷ Guidance on digitalization relevant to birth registration includes the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Digitisation Guidebook (see <http://www.crvs-dgb.org/en/>); the Model Governance Framework for Digital Legal Identity Systems of the United Nations Development Programme (see <https://www.governance4id.org/>), the Universal Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards Framework (see <https://www.dpi-safeguards.org/>); and UNICEF “CRVS platforms: key findings for practitioners” (New York, 2023).

¹⁰⁸ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *States of Fragility 2022* (Paris, 2022), p. 6; and UNICEF, “UNICEF humanitarian action for children 2024: overview” (New York 2023), p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Submission from Child Identity Protection.

authorities should evaluate these measures and institutionalize them as part of overall civil registration and vital statistics improvement to strengthen system resilience in anticipation of future emergencies and prolonged crises.

G. Accountability

77. Accountability of all stakeholders – Governments, businesses, partners and donors – is essential for upholding children’s rights in birth registration and addressing any violations or failures to fully realize their rights. Effective feedback, complaint and redress mechanisms¹¹⁰ are critical. OHCHR has developed guidance on applying the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to technology companies and on applying a children’s rights-based approach in the digital environment.¹¹¹

VI. Conclusions

78. Birth registration immediately after birth is a human right. Universal fulfilment of registration, immediately or as soon as possible after birth, and provision of first birth certificates free of charge are essential elements for the enjoyment of children’s rights, the protection of children and a life of dignity. It is also a key element in recognition before the law in many domestic systems and to access to essential services. However, with only five years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, universal birth registration remains out of reach for millions and progress does not meet the level required to achieve universal registration by 2030.

79. The barriers to universal birth registration are well established. The lack of inclusive, accessible and available birth registration systems, resulting in non-registration, has a devastating impact on affected children that may last throughout their lives. A rights-based approach is key to universal coverage. Investing in a rights-based approach to birth registration promotes social inclusion and is central to strong and healthy economies and societies. Establishing free, easily accessible, inclusive and rights-respecting birth registration systems builds societies in which everyone is recognized and protected.

80. While digital technologies alone are not sufficient to address the multiple barriers to universal birth registration or fully close the certification gap, they may be an important tool to strengthening and streamlining birth registration systems. A comprehensive hybrid, integrated systems approach, grounded in decentralization and digitalization, will better reflect and serve society’s diverse and complex realities and ensure universal birth registration.

81. Universal birth registration must be prioritized by States and the international community and further measures should be undertaken in line with the vision of a fairer and more equitable world to which Member States committed in the Pact for the Future.

VII. Recommendations

82. **Recalling that Sustainable Development Goal 16 contains a dedicated target on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030, the High Commissioner encourages Member States to:**

(a) Enact and implement the legal and policy frameworks, anchored in child and human rights, necessary to establish a comprehensive children’s rights-based

¹¹⁰ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 8 See also <https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/policy-and-methodological-publications/access-to-remedy-bhr-interpretive-guide>.

¹¹¹ See A/HRC/50/56; <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/B-Tech/key-characteristics-business-respect.pdf>; and <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/business/b-tech/B-Tech-Unicef-Briefing.pdf>.

approach to universal birth registration, including using digital technologies. That involves a sustainable, hybrid, integrated systems approach, standardized birth registration and certification processes that are automatic, immediate, accessible, simple and free, and universal, well-managed and well-resourced registration systems that are flexible and centred on digitalization and decentralization between civil registration and vital statistics, national identification or population registers and health, education and social protection systems;

(b) Implement “one-step, one-visit” approaches allowing for the declaration, registration and immediate issuance of birth certificates to close the birth registration and certification gap;

(c) Take all measures necessary to eliminate all forms of discrimination in law, policy and practice and develop birth registration systems that reach all children, irrespective of the child’s or parents’ or caregivers’ race, colour, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth, nationality, statelessness, migration or other status;

(d) Ensure coordinated, sustained and wide-ranging awareness-raising campaigns, particularly among marginalized groups, focused on the importance of birth registration and legal identity, the long-term legal, social and economic benefits and how to register;

(e) Ensure that birth registration information is accessible to all, including in child-friendly formats;

(f) Ensure that children and any other person whose human rights are violated as a result of lack of birth registration or certificate have access to effective remedies and full reparation;

(g) Increase allocation of resources and take concrete actions, including through international assistance and cooperation, to support the realization of sustainable, consistent, hybrid birth registration systems.

83. The High Commissioner calls upon businesses providing or involved in digitalizing civil registration:

(a) To conduct human rights due diligence in order to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for how they address their adverse human rights impacts;

(b) To have in place processes to enable the remediation of any adverse human rights impacts that they cause or to which they contribute.

84. The High Commissioner recommends that the international community, including international organizations:

(a) Continue to support States and advocate for human rights safeguards in the development of transparent, rights-respecting civil registration and vital statistics systems, including when using digital technologies, enhance capacity-building and collaboration efforts and undertake knowledge-sharing, case studies and practices and processes to bridge the digital divide.

(b) Systematically conduct human rights due diligence when supporting States concerning birth registration, including in the context of digitalization, when applicable, in accordance with the Secretary-General’s guidance entitled “Human rights due diligence for digital technology use”.