The Health Metrics Network (HMN) and the World Health Organization (WHO) welcome **adoption**, yesterday, by the **United Nations Human Rights Council** of a **resolution** on **birth registration**.

The resolution, entitled “Birth registration and the right of everyone to recognition everywhere as a person before the law”, seeks action for universal registration at birth of all individuals, in order to reduce the high number of individuals throughout the world who are not registered and may never be registered during their lifetime. HMN and WHO participated in consultations on the draft resolution and provided technical input.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 40 million, or approximately one third of, births are not registered each year. Many barriers can prevent people from registering births including: poverty, social exclusion, remote geographical location, disability, discrimination and vulnerability, as well as a country’s laws, administration and infrastructure. It is critical that registration of a birth is followed by the issuance of an official birth certificate.

“Recent emphasis and action on the long-neglected, but critical, issue of registering births, deaths and causes of death will lead to better health, equity and accountability,” says Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, Executive Secretary ad interim, HMN and WHO Assistant Director-General for Innovation, Information, Evidence and Research. “I welcome this latest commitment by countries towards universal birth registration.”

“Lack of birth registration not only impacts the enjoyment of rights to which all persons are entitled, but may also hinder access to a range of essential services, including health care,” says Dr Flavia Bustreo, WHO Assistant Director-General for Family, Women’s and Children’s

Health. Moreover, without data on births, national governments will not have credible evidence as a basis for planning, implementing and monitoring public health policies and programmes, and the global community will have less facility in reaching internationally-agreed development goals. “The Council’s resolution is therefore important and timely, and will provide further incentive for countries to ensure birth registration for all children.”

In 2011, the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women’s and Children’s Health, co-chaired and hosted by the World Health Organization, recommended that by 2015 “all countries [would] have taken significant steps to establish a system for registration of births, deaths and causes of death,…” HMN has been designated as a key partner to lead actions for the realization of objectives of this first recommendation of the Commission. WHO and partners are currently facilitating a series of intercountry workshops on the Accountability Framework in which country teams start planning for a national roadmap to follow up on the recommendations of the Commission. Strengthening civil registration systems is a key component in this effort.

Through its ongoing Monitoring of Vital Events, through the use of information technology (MOVE-IT) country projects in Africa and Asia, HMN will be generating lessons learned and guidance on best practices for improving civil registration in developing countries. These will be presented at the 8th Africa Symposium for Statistics Development and the Statistics Commission for Africa meetings in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire in November 2012, and will provide an important input to governments in designing appropriate approaches to reach universal coverage of birth registration