Resolution of the International Commission on Civil Status concerning information in the event of death, adopted in Paris on 8 October 2026

Explanatory Report

1. Under international law, when the competent authorities of a State possess information concerning the death of a foreign national occurring within their territory, they are required to inform without delay the consular post of the State of nationality of the deceased within whose district the death occurred. This customary obligation was notably codified by Article 37 of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

2. The International Commission on Civil Status has developed a significant number of conventions that may apply to death notification: Convention (No.2) on the issue free of charge and the exemption from legalisation of copies of official records of civil status, signed at Luxembourg on 26 September 1957, Convention (No.3) on the international exchange of information relating to civil status, signed at Istanbul on 4 September 1958 and its Additional Protocol to the Convention on the international exchange of information relating to civil status, signed at Patras on 6 September 1989, Convention (No.26) on the international exchange of information relating to civil status, signed at Neuchâtel on 12 September 1997, Convention (No.10) relating to the establishment of death in certain cases, signed at Athens on 14 September 1966, Convention (No.16) on the issue of multilingual extracts from civil-status records, signed at Vienna on 8 September 1976, Convention (No.34) on the issue of multilingual and coded certificates and extracts from civil-status records, signed at Strasbourg on 14 March 2014.

3. In order to comply with international obligations concerning the information of deaths, the International Commission on Civil Status advocates, in its resolution, the use of these various instruments among the Contracting Parties and recommends that non-Contracting States ratify or accede to them (Article 1, paragraphs 1 and 2). In cases where none of these instruments is applicable, the International Commission on Civil Status wishes to make available a standard international death information form in order to simplify the work of the competent authorities, in particular by avoiding difficulties related to translation. The aim is thus to fill a gap identified in practice, as the International Commission on Civil Status is frequently approached by practitioners from different countries who are aware of their obligation to provide such information but do not know how to proceed. In order to preserve specific arrangements, the final paragraph of Article 1 states that the solutions advocated by the resolution apply only subject to bilateral or multilateral agreements providing for the direct exchange of civil status records between States.

It should be noted that there is a widespread practice whereby the forms established under Conventions Nos. 16 and 34 are used by the authorities of States that are not parties to those instruments. Naturally, in such situations, the forms do not benefit from the favourable legal regime established by the two Conventions. In particular, the provisions concerning exemption from legalisation and the evidentiary value of civil status records do not apply.
In order to enjoy all the benefits provided for in international models, States are invited to ratify the International Commission on Civil Status Conventions, particularly Convention No.34.

It should also be noted that the International Commission on Civil Status logo is protected by law and may not be used without the International Commission on Civil Status's formal consent.

4. Article 2 of the Resolution sets out the legal framework governing the form. Its use is therefore optional, which follows from the very nature of the instrument, as it cannot impose binding rules on States. The following non-binding guidelines are proposed. In principle, the form consists of two pages and reproduces all the standard entries contained in the model established by the International Commission on Civil Status. The logo of the International Commission on Civil Status appears at the top of the page and as a watermark.

5. The form is completed by the competent authority and contains the information available to it. The objective is to provide the receiving authority with as much information as possible. However, where certain information cannot be provided, in particular because the issuing authority does not possess it or because the applicable rules, especially those relating to the protection of personal data, prohibit its disclosure, it is recommended, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that the relevant fields be rendered unusable by drawing a line through them (end mark).

6. The International Commission on Civil Status's usual methods are employed to address difficulties relating to the understanding of the document. Accordingly, the standard entries appearing on the form are drafted in both French and English. States remain free to translate the form into other languages, in particular their national languages. The lexicon established by the International Commission on Civil Status (https://ciec1.org/en/lexicon/) may assist in this regard. This tool also makes it possible to understand the content of the various boxes of the form through the coding system that has been put in place.

7. For the completion of the form, although they are not set out in detail in the Resolution, the application of the International Commission on Civil Status's usual rules is recommended:

a) All the entries of the models shall be written in Latin characters in detached script; they may also be written in the characters of the language of the authority drawing up the document.

b) Dates shall be written in Arab numerals denoting successively the day, the month and the year (DD/MM/YY). The day and the month shall be indicated by two figures, and the year by four figures. The first nine days of the month and the first nine months of the year shall be indicated by numbers running from 01 to 09.

c) In order to indicate the sex, (1-8-2) the following symbols, exclusively, must be used: M = male, F = female and X = other (in this case, the issuing authority may specify the designation employed, e.g. "X diverse").

The competent authorities have the option of adding the term "gender".

d) To fill in the box 6 "Nationality", the letters used to designate the country of registration of motor vehicles shall be used; to indicate the condition of refugee, the letters REF shall be used and to indicate the condition of stateless person, the letters APA.

e) Box 1-8-5 "Other particulars" allows the competent authorities to add any information they deem useful or necessary (for example fingerprints).

8. All the entries to be made on the pages 1 and 2 of the models must be as precise as possible. In particular:

a) the name of any place mentioned in a document shall be followed by the indication of the State in which that place is situated, whenever that State is not the State where that document is being issued; letters used to designate the country of registration of motor vehicles are used for this purpose;

b) the identity number shall be indicated as far as possible; it shall be followed by the name of the State that attributed it; if the State issuing the model and the receiving State both attribute such a number, both numbers shall be indicated on the same line, followed by the name of the State; letters used to designate the country of registration of motor vehicles are used for this purpose;
c) if a field cannot be completed, it shall be rendered unusable by drawing a line through it (end mark).

9. Each document shall indicate the name and capacity of the person drawing it up. It shall be dated and bear the requisite signature and seal; only one signature is required per document. The signature requirement will be considered fulfilled in relation to an electronic document if a reliable method is used to identify the signatory, in accordance with the Resolution on electronic signature and electronic seal adopted on 18 September 2025. The seal requirement will be considered fulfilled in relation to an electronic document if a reliable method is used to provide reliable assurance of the origin, date of creation and time of signature of the electronic document, and to detect any alteration to the electronic document after the time and date of affixation.

10. It should be noted that a duly completed form does not constitute a civil status record as such (Article 2, final paragraph). It merely constitutes information transmitted to the authority of the State of nationality of the deceased. Consequently, it does not benefit from the rules concerning evidentiary value that are usually provided for in the instruments of the International Commission on Civil Status (Article 8 of Convention No.16; Article 5 of Convention No.34; art. 4 of Convention No.2).

11. With regard to the methods of transmission, the approach adopted in Article 3 of the Resolution is guided by considerations of efficiency and practicality. Accordingly, reference is made to the rules applicable to the two authorities concerned. Depending on the circumstances, transmission may therefore take place either in paper form or by electronic means.
The Resolution nevertheless states that the use of a simple telephone call, despite its advantages in terms of simplicity and speed, should be avoided. Indeed, there is a risk that information transmitted in this manner may be lost or inaccurately recorded.
Following information by paper or electronic means, any subsequent exchanges may take place in a more informal manner, by email or telephone, again subject to the law of the States concerned. In accordance with a well-established principle reflected in the instruments of the International Commission on Civil Status, direct communication between the authorities concerned should be encouraged.
The final paragraph of Article 3 further specifies that no fees should, in principle, be charged in this context, on the basis of reciprocity between States. However, in order to accommodate the specific requirements of the laws of certain States, it was added that this solution should apply only “to the greatest extent possible”.

12. It was considered essential to include provisions on the time limit for information in Article 4 of the Resolution. This is indeed a crucial practical matter. While it is important that the information be transmitted, it loses much of its relevance if it reaches the national authorities of the deceased only after a significant delay. In light of the diversity of practices among States, the solution adopted is to establish a general principle of promptness, which is also consistent with the spirit of Article 37 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, according to which information must be made “without delay”. In order to provide guidance for practice, it was decided to include a specific time frame. Accordingly, the maximum period should be

thirty days, running not from the date of death itself but from the date on which the issuing authority became aware of it. The working group noted that, in practice, there is often a time gap between these two events. During the discussions of the working group, some participants considered that this time limit should be understood as working days. Once again adopting a pragmatic approach, the Resolution states that the thirty-day period may be exceeded in exceptional circumstances.