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Statistics programme of the Economic Commission for Africa:
statutory issues

Statistics programme of the Economic Commission for Africa: programme of work on data and statistics for the period 2023–2024

I. Introduction

1. The following proposed programme of work on data and statistics is submitted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to the Statistical Commission for Africa to guide the Commission's contribution to data and statistics on the continent for the period 2023–2024.

2. Following the introduction in section I, section II of the present document provides a summary of the key achievements of ECA during the period 2021–2022. Section III sets out the objective of the subprogramme on data and statistics for the coming two years. Section IV provides a summary of the key activities for the period 2023–2024. Section V sets out the potential partnerships of ECA with other pan-African institutions and their activities on data and statistics in Africa. Section VI provides a brief discussion on the allocation of resources to implement the activities of the subprogramme. In conclusion, in section VII, the Statistical Commission for Africa is requested to express its views and guidance on the conclusions and points for discussion.

II. Summary of key achievements during the period 2021–2022

3. The outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) highlighted the vulnerability of African national statistical systems both in their routine operations and, more particularly, in their data collection activities in the field. It was in that context that ECA implemented its subprogramme on data and statistics for the period 2021–2022, with guidance from the Statistical Commission for Africa at its seventh meeting, which was held online in October 2020 because of the pandemic.

4. During the period 2021–2022, ECA has enhanced the capacity of, and has provided technical support to, Member States in producing and disseminating harmonized and comparable economic statistics and national accounts, following the international statistical standards. A series of online regional seminars were conducted to encourage the participation and dialogue of national accountants in Africa in the global System of National Accounts

* E/ECA/STATCOM/8/2022/1.



update programme. In addition, a series of capacity-building and technical assistance sessions were carried out in the framework of the African technical assistance project on capacity-building in trade in value added and supply and use tables. These sessions, which were jointly delivered by ECA, the World Trade Organization and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, were aimed at guiding country teams to improve the quality and availability of their related datasets and accounts (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Nigeria and Senegal).

5. Zambia received support through a project run by the Development Account of the Secretariat in the compilation of supply and use tables, which was completed in the second quarter of 2021. In addition, a series of regional online training webinars were held on the use of telephone surveys to collect consumer price index data and on the use of alternative approaches for price data collection to compile the index, along with a follow-up technical assistance project to support those countries that were interested in adopting mobile phones for consumer price index data collection. Through the Price Watch Centre initiative, a series of regional seminars were organized on the analysis of changes and developments of the consumer price index and other price indices, with the attendance of African ministers of economics and finance.

6. The ECA subprogramme contributed to the improvement of the quality of demographic and socioeconomic information on African people through methodological excellence and partnerships. The work of ECA also contributed to the improvement and strengthening of civil registration systems by providing African countries with technical assistance in digitalization, decentralization and advocacy. In addition, ECA supported African countries in undertaking their digital censuses by developing and deploying information technology applications that improved the quality, timeliness and efficiency of data. The technological system of digital census services, developed by the African Centre for Statistics, comprises a census monitoring dashboard, a provisioning tool, an operations tracking system and a census e-question repository. ECA also assisted some countries in gaining access to the information technology equipment needed to undertake digital censuses. The Gender Data Network contributed to the production and use of gender statistics in Africa.

7. The subprogramme has focused on promoting and facilitating the implementation of measures to address the nexus issues of the African development agenda. The geospatial work of the African Centre for Statistics helped to enhance the capacities of Member States to develop and implement integrated geospatial information frameworks, with several countries developing and implementing national action plans on integrated geospatial information frameworks.

8. Through the subprogramme, ECA provided technical assistance to countries in implementing and revising their national strategies for the development of statistics and provided assistance to national statistics offices in the application of data dissemination and exchange systems. Consultations were organized with Member States and regional stakeholders for the validation of data for the African Statistical Yearbook. Sustained efforts were made to update the ECA database, and efforts were made to assess the availability and advocate the collection of Sustainable Development Goals data, which led to a significant increase in countries with available data on the Goals. For example, the number of countries with available data for more than 140 indicators rose from 8 in 2019 to 43 in 2021, and the number of Goal indicators with no data dropped from 79 in 2019 to 30 in 2021, according to the assessment made in October of that year.

9. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, during its fifty-third session, which was held in Addis Ababa in hybrid format on 22 and 23 March 2021, endorsed the creation of the African

group on transformation and modernization of official statistics, composed of 10 directors general of national statistical offices. The Conference encouraged the group to pave the way and propose regional guidance and standards for the modernization and transformation of national statistical systems. The Commission actively supported the operationalization of the group by providing resource persons and technical assistance, which led to the elaboration of a road map to better guide Member States on their journey towards the transformation and modernization of official statistics.

III. Objective and expected results of the subprogramme

A. Objective

10. The objective of the subprogramme on data and statistics is to strengthen the production, dissemination and use of credible data, statistics and geospatial information at the national, regional and global levels for evidence-based policymaking and decision-making.

B. Expected results

11. The subprogramme is intended to lead Member States towards achieving the transformation and modernization of official statistics and geospatial data in the coming two years.

12. The expected results are as follows:

(a) Enhanced capacity and efficiency in the collection of comparable and harmonized statistics at various levels of disaggregation, with improved uptake and use of innovative tools and technologies and modern methods for statistical operations in national statistical systems;

(b) Improved uptake of data and statistics and geospatial information management, with closer collaboration between components and stakeholders of the national statistical systems and better coordinated geospatial data infrastructures;

(c) Increased commitment, investment and ownership of the processes of production, analysis, dissemination and use of statistics and spatial information, and strengthened capacity of Member States to integrate geospatial and statistical information infrastructures;

(d) Enhanced monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want, of the African Union.

IV. Key activities for the period 2023–2024

13. Guided by the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa, Member States will be supported in transforming their data governance and management methods by digitalizing the data collection, compilation and dissemination processes for statistical areas, including censuses and civil registration systems. They will also be provided with technical assistance and training in the design and implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics and national spatial data infrastructure with related integrated geospatial information frameworks. Key activities will be undertaken in the areas outlined below.

A. Road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics

14. Activities will pursue the following objectives related to the road map:

(a) Providing regional advisory and technical assistance to Member States in implementing the road map for the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems;

(b) Providing technical assistance to Member States in creating national strategies for the development of statistics, statistical legislation and the coordination of national statistical systems;

(c) Advocating resource mobilization for the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems;

(d) Enhancing support for the African group on the transformation and modernization of official statistics, and support for its technical working groups.

B. Big data, data science and modernizing methods in economic statistics

15. In this area, support will be provided to the United Nations regional hub on data science and national statistics offices on data science projects in the modernization of statistical data collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination.

C. Geospatial information

16. The following activities related to geospatial information will be undertaken:

(a) Advancing and supporting technical activities in the development of national spatial data infrastructure, harmonized with national statistical development strategies, serving as integrated frameworks with policies and instruments that facilitate the availability of and access to spatially enabled development data;

(b) Encouraging and facilitating the integration of statistics with geospatial information to attain viable and meaningful outcomes, analysis and visualization of data in supporting and tracking the progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) Maintaining authoritative geospatial data, information and knowledge resources, tools, applications and services that improve availability and use of spatially enabled data for informed decision-making;

(d) Developing policy guidelines and strategies for the implementation of the integrated geospatial information framework;

(e) Building the capacities of Member States through the organization and implementation of training workshops on the development of national action plans on the integrated geospatial information framework; on geospatial knowledge infrastructure with innovative geospatial responses and solutions for a post-pandemic recovery; and on the taxonomy of geospatial datasets for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals for national mapping agencies and national statistics offices.

D. Gross domestic product, System of National Accounts and consumer price index

17. In these areas, the following activities will take place:

(a) Providing technical assistance in gross domestic product (GDP) updating and rebasing and delivering online thematic seminars on GDP rebasing;

(b) Contributing to the inter-secretariat working group on beyond GDP, and other working groups on beyond GDP indicators and contributions to the global System of National Accounts update programme, the regional thematic seminar on the System of National Accounts update programme, and the report on countries' feedback on the System of National Accounts update programme;

(c) Supporting the Africa Natural Capital Accounting Community of Practice (continuous activity);

(d) Updating and analysing price statistics prepared by the Price Watch Centre, providing policy dialogue webinars on price concerns for Africa, producing continuous updates and expansions on the ECA Price Watch Centre websites, and updating and improving price data sets;

(e) Undertaking regional seminars for Member States to build their capacity in using alternative techniques for consumer price index data collection.

E. Demographic and social statistics

18. The following activities relating to demographics and social statistics will be undertaken:

(a) Providing advisory services and technical assistance to, and building the capacities of Member States in producing and using demographic and social statistics, including the modernization of census undertaking;

(b) Developing manuals, guidelines and tools on various aspects relating to the production and use of demographic and social statistics, based on standard methodologies that are adapted to the African context;

(c) Conducting research and contributing to the development of international standards in the area of population, vital statistics and social statistic;

(d) Supporting research and the analytical needs of various ECA divisions in the area of demography and social statistics.

F. Data and Sustainable Development Goal indicators

19. The following objectives will be pursued in this area:

(a) Maintaining and regularly updating databases that are accessible for public use, ensuring the availability of harmonized statistics and data disaggregated by location on topics such as African economies, demographics, social indicators, environment and other statistics (agriculture, energy, consumer price index and trade), all of which are needed for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;

(b) Enhancing communication about and advocacy of the use of statistics and geospatial information through national celebrations of African Statistics Day, the engagement of social media, and the design and distribution of communication and advocacy materials;

- (c) Strengthening the regional input-output tables and the framework on trade-in-value added;
- (d) Supporting Members States in using Sustainable Development Goal dashboards to enhance monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- (e) Producing the African Statistical Yearbook.

V. Synergy with programmes of pan-African institutions and resource mobilization perspectives

20. The Commission will work in partnership and coordinate its efforts with other United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (subregional, regional and international), academic and research institutions, multinational corporations, the private sector and civil society organizations on a regional scale for the benefit of all Africans and for input into the global context.

21. Through the subprogramme, ECA will build on the synergy of actions created within the African Statistical Coordination Committee. The Committee was established in 2007 with the purpose of achieving greater synergy between regional institutions and coordinating statistical programmes and activities, with a view to enhancing and sustaining the effectiveness of statistical support to African countries. Regular meetings of the Committee will be conducted.

22. The implementation of subprogramme activities will contribute to the implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa. Technical expertise provided by ECA will further contribute to achieving the objectives of the specialized technical groups of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa. In addition, ECA will continue to play a leading role in the activities of the opportunity and issues-based coalition on strengthened integrated data and statistics systems for sustainable development (E/ECA/COE/40/13, section A), primarily in the management of the Africa United Nations Data for Development Portal and the implementation of the United Nations Africa Data and Statistics Strategy.

23. In the area of geospatial information, ECA will continue to work in partnership and align its programmatic framework with the Statistics Division and the United Nations Geospatial Network to advance implementation of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa. It will also continue to contribute to various regional networks and initiatives, including the Digital Earth Africa programme; the Global Monitoring of Environment and Sustainability of the African Union; the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development; and the African Regional Institute for Geospatial Science and Technology.

24. The sixth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration is scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa in October 2022. The Conference is being organized by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank. The Economic Commission for Africa will be working in partnership with the following core groups: Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, International Organization for Migration, International Organization of la Francophonie, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Vital Strategies, World Bank, and the World Health Organization. This partnership will support the strengthening of civil registration systems through the African Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, as mandated by the

Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. In addition, the Commission will be collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund and the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in the implementation of digital censuses.

VI. Resource mobilization

25. As usual, ECA will allocate resources from its regular annual budget to cover expert group meetings, consultancy services and technical assistance missions. Most of the expected support on the implementation of the full range of activities, however, still relies on the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources. Accordingly, ECA will approach its partners with a view to mobilizing resources to support the subprogramme on data and statistics. With regard to the implementation of activities, synergies between the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank will be developed, including cost-sharing approaches for key activities leading to the transformation and modernization of statistical systems.

VII. Conclusion and points for discussion

26. The above mentioned work is expected to contribute to improving the uptake of data and statistics and geospatial information management, fostering a closer collaboration between components and stakeholders of the national statistical systems and developing better coordinated geospatial data infrastructures. Equally, it will increase commitment to, investment in and ownership of the processes of the production, analysis, dissemination and use of statistics and spatial information. Furthermore, these interventions will improve data collection approaches and methodologies, and the processing, analysis and dissemination of timely data by national statistical systems using modern methods, and enhance monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

27. The Statistical Commission for Africa is requested to:

(a) Express its views on the proposed programme of work on data and statistics for the period 2023–2024;

(b) Endorse the programme of work and further request ECA to mobilize adequate resources for its implementation in collaboration with pan-African organization and development partners;

(c) Appeal to Members States to allocate domestic resources to implement a transformation and modernization road map for their national statistical systems.
