Economic and Social Council

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Statistical Commission for Africa
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Statistical capacity-building programmes of partner entities

Statistical capacity development in Africa: progress report for 2020−2022

I. Introduction

1.	Although the African statistics system has made remarkable progress in recent years, particularly in the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems, finding an adequate response to users' needs, including the timely availability of high-quality statistics, remains a challenge in several countries. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis exacerbated this situation through its impacts on the operations of national statistical systems, highlighting their vulnerabilities.

2.	The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and development partners continue to support statistical development in African countries, with a view to addressing these challenges and undertaking the transformation and modernization of their national statistical systems. ECA produces periodic reports on that development. At its seventh meeting in October 2020, the Statistical Commission for Africa endorsed the last report.

3.	The present report highlights statistical capacity development initiatives from 2020 to 2022. The report covers the following topics:

	(a)	Update on strategic frameworks for statistics at the national, subregional and regional levels;

	(b)	Takwimu Young African Statisticians programme;

	(c)	Response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national statistical systems;

	(d)	Progress in the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems in Africa;

	(e)	Conclusion and points for discussion: the report concludes with proposals for a set of recommendations and points for decisions to be taken by the Statistics Commission.

II. Statistical strategic frameworks

A. National level

4.	Pan-African organizations such as the African Development Bank, ECA

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

and the African Union Commission, together with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa, have continuously supported the design, implementation and evaluation of national strategies for the development of statistics at the country level. Several institutions, agencies and other partners, including the Statistics Division of the United Nations and the World Bank, and bilateral and multilateral partners, have also supported the formulation of national strategies for the development of statistics in various countries, including Burundi, the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, the Niger, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

5.   The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century launched the latest version of the guidelines for national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS Guidelines 3.0) and built the capacity of trainers in the effective and efficient use of the document. The new guidelines restructure the lifecycle of such national strategies into stages, phases and steps. They highlight special topics identified as key entry points for developing the capacity of the national statistical systems in line with the new data system.

6.   The Partnership has also published a guide on geospatial data integration in official statistics. This document provides practical guidance for national statistical offices to form stronger partnerships with national geospatial agencies to integrate geospatial data into official statistics. In addition, the Partnership has launched a data flow analysis framework, which provides detailed information on the analysis of indicator dissemination processes in national statistical offices and lays out both the basic and the advanced work required to set up a workflow-based, integrated dissemination solution for indicators.

7.   In collaboration with the African Development Bank, the African Union Institute for Statistics and ECA, the Partnership has provided capacity development through regional training workshops for staff from African national statistical offices and planning ministries on the NSDS Guidelines 3.0, the Advanced Data Planning Tool and the Capacity Development 4.0 framework. This training has equipped participants with new skills around the new guidelines, taking into consideration lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and other aspects, such as mainstreaming gender statistics in the statistical planning process and statistics planning in times of crises.

8.   In addition, in 2021, the Bern Network on Financing Data for Development, whose secretariat is provided by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, launched the Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data. This platform allows users to analyse data financing flows, identify funding gaps and connect to new communities of experts. So far, financing needs information for 15 African countries may be found in the platform, namely: Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, the Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

9.   In March 2020, the World Bank allocated $379 million to a new project on harmonizing and improving statistics in West Africa, degined to strengthen statistical systems in Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo, and also the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

10.   The African Development Bank provided a grant of $4.3 million to the Federal Government of Somalia to finance the Statistics Development Support Project in the Federal Government and in Hirshabelle, Galmudug and Jubbaland States. The overall development objective of the project is to strengthen the

national statistical system to produce and disseminate statistical information for evidence-based policy, planning and decision- making.

11.   Some African countries received support from the Statistics Division on specific issues. The Division is working with Senegal in the context of the Data for Now initiative, aimed at increasing the use of robust methods and tools to improve the timeliness, coverage, and quality of Sustainable Development Goal data through collaboration and partnership, technical and capacity support, and information sharing. Data modelling and the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), and quality assurance of the national energy information management system and energy statistics were the areas of focus in Ghana. Ethiopia was supported in applying small area estimation to produce disaggregated Sustainable Development Goal data. Cameroon and Namibia are receiving support in the use of administrative data for the compilation of specific Sustainable Development Goal indicators.

12.   Through collaborative peer-to-peer partnerships with the national statistical offices of Ghana, Kenya, Namibia and Rwanda, and ECA, the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom has supported many aspects of statistical modernization. Across these partnerships, the Office has improved the collection and use of census data, vital statistics, and economic and labour market information to enable international comparisons and better evidenced socioeconomic policies. The Office has built leadership and encouraged the production and use of relevant and high-quality statistical data.

13.   Statistics Norway has continued its cooperation with Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Somalia, the Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania and with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The institution shared Norway's experience and contributed to developing the capacity for the use of administrative data to produce official statistics at both the country and the international level. Cooperation areas also include food security statistics and the National Accounts Database System (NADABAS), a national accounts tool developed under a Nordic project.

B.   Subregional level

14.   COMESA developed its third regional strategy for the development of statistics for the period 2021–2025 with the support of pan-African institutions and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. This strategy seeks to respond to statistical requirements raised in the COMESA medium-term strategic plan for the period 2021–2025. It also aims to enhance strategic partnerships to facilitate, coordinate and strengthen external partnerships, while highlighting the importance of South-South collaboration at the regional and national levels.

15.   The East African Community (EAC) is at the final stage of implementing its regional statistical development plan for the period 2017/18–2021/22. The plan includes a programme to boost the statistical capacity of national statistical organizations. In this context, the EAC, through the EAC Statistics Development and Harmonization Project funded by the World Bank, has provided support in information and communications technology (ICT) and furniture equipment to the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre in the United Republic of Tanzania and the School of Statistics and Planning at Makerere University in Uganda, to enhance their capacity to perform training in modern data collection, compilation and analysis techniques. Through this support, the training laboratories of these institutions were equipped to facilitate and support training. Similarly, EAC provided ICT equipment and furniture to the data laboratory at the national statistical office of Rwanda, with a focus on harnessing big data for official statistics. The institution also offered the long-

term secondment of an expert to South Sudan, with support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

16.   The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) developed its first regional strategy for the development of statistics, which runs from 2021-2025. In the framework of this strategy, IGAD established the IGAD statistics committee to provide coordination frameworks, which held its first meeting in April 2022 to adopt its terms of reference. In line with this strategy, IGAD established the regional technical working group on migration data and statistics in August 2021 and adopted its terms of reference. To date, two meetings have been conducted within the framework of this working group, resulting in the establishment of key migration priority indicators and the first edition of the migration statistics report. Furthermore, in June 2022, IGAD, in collaboration with the African Union Institute for Statistics, organized a meeting of the regional technical working group on national accounts, during which the group's terms of reference were adopted. IGAD also developed a draft data-sharing policy and data quality assessment frameworks.

17.   The Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics organized several activities in COMESA, ECOWAS, the Great Lakes region and IGAD to raise awareness on international recommendations on refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) statistics and build the capacity of countries to compile such statistics using these recommendations. In parallel, African Union Institute for Statistics, in collaboration with Statistics Sweden, is implementing a project for migration statistics in Africa, which improved the collection of labour migration data from member countries. It also established methods to compensate for the lack of responses that have been implemented to improve migration statistics. In addition, the Africa Migration Data Network was launched in 2021, to promote a continental exchange of good practices on migration data issues, facilitate coordination and collaboration among network members in the implementation of migration data-related initiatives, and improve their effectiveness.

18.   The Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) pursued its mandate to provide technical support for the harmonization of statistical production methods, with the aim of ensuring full comparability of data from its member States. In this process, AFRISTAT signed agreements with some countries to assist them in implementing specific components of partner loans and grants, including Chad and Djibouti in the area of economic statistics, Gabon and Guinea in coordination and governance, capacities development, and short-term indicators and national accounts, and Mali in the compilation of regional economic accounts. In addition, the eight member States of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) were supported in conducting an integrated regional survey on employment and the informal sector. AFRISTAT revitalized its partnerships in new areas, in particular with the French agency for international technical expertise, Expertise France, on the digital economy and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on specific indicators under Sustainable Development Goal 2 and research on storage losses. In addition, the institution set up a regional working group on the quality approach, with a view to providing technical assistance on national quality assurance frameworks, and promoted the consolidation of national expertise through South-South cooperation at the technical level. Lastly, in 2022, AFRISTAT welcomed the second intake of its Young Statisticians programme.

19.   The Southern African Development Community was supported by the African Development Bank in evaluating implementation of the regional strategy for the development of statistics for the period 2015–2020 and developing the successor strategy for 2020–2030. The regional strategy provides a prioritized road map facilitating delivery of its mandate to produce

reliable and harmonized statistics to monitor and measure progress across all domains of the SADC regional integration agenda.

C. Regional level

20. ECA developed the African Geospatial Development Index, a conceptual index of multi-composite indicators designed to measure progress by African countries in managing geospatial information policies and resources. ECA prepared guidelines for the implementation of national spatial data infrastructures in Africa, tailored to the specific conditions of different African countries. In the same domain, ECA supported the development guidelines and protocols on geocoding and the use of spatial techniques in analysing and properly interpreting census data and developed guidelines for the integration of geospatial information and statistics. It also provided support by boosting the capacities of African countries to identify second-level administrative boundary information and facilitated the development of the Africa Geoportal, an online mapping service aimed at enhancing map production.

21. In addition, ECA also developed an online course on geospatial information systems governance and the socioeconomic benefits of geospatial technology in Africa. ECA produced a technical report on innovative geospatial decision support system for informed decision-making with a focus on transformative recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Congo basin. Support was also provided to Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eswatini, Mozambique, the Niger and Togo in updating and validating their national second administrative level boundary databases; to Cameroon, Kenya, the Niger, and Tunisia in compiling geospatial datasets; and to Burkina Faso and Ethiopia in the development of national action plans for the integration of their GIS frameworks. Technical assistance and advisory services were also provided to Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Tunisia and Zimbabwe in updating the Sustainable Development Goal dashboards of their national statistical offices.

22. In the context of the initiative, launched in 2017, to measure gross domestic product (GDP) of cities in Africa, ECA provided technical support in measuring the GDP of six pilot cities, namely Accra, Harare, Kigali, Lusaka, Maseru and Yaoundé. This initiative is designed to strengthening countries' capacity to measure subnational and city GDP and its contribution to the national economy. The draft report was thoroughly examined during an expert group meeting in June 2022.

23. ECA has also engaged the participation of African countries in the global process to update the 2008 System of National Accounts by providing a forum to discuss and comment on the guidance notes, to assess experimental estimates and to make recommendations.

24. The third phase of the capacity-building programme in environmental statistics and developing the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) is still being carried out by ECA. Between July 2020 and June 2022, ECA coordinated the strengthening of the capacity of the national statistical system in Gabon to measure and evaluate natural capital in the country's development strategies. The programme also maintained its technical support for the tourism satellite accounts project of the ECA Subregional Office for Southern Africa.

25. The Africa project on the compilation of supply and use tables, jointly led by the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and ECA, ran a series of capacity-building measures, in the form of online training, face-to-face seminars, national workshops and on-site technical assistance. In 2020 and

2021, Eswatini, Seychelles and Zambia received assistance with the production of supply and use tables for each country.

26. Working together with ECA and OECD, in 2020, WTO launched a project on developing statistical capacity in Africa for integration into trade in value added databases, with the objective of enhancing the ability of the participating countries to produce trade in value added indicators. The project seeks to work with five African target countries (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Nigeria and Senegal) in incorporating their data in the trade in value added database and building experience in that area.

27. In April 2021, under the African Development Fund, the African Development Bank approved a statistics capacity-building grant of some $14 million to support 37 countries. The COMESA secretariat was selected to carry out this fifth statistical capacity-building programme, as part of the implementation of the updated Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa across all Fund-eligible countries, subregional organizations, regional economic communities and statistical training centres across the continent.

28. The Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems 2017–2021 undertook numerous activities to strengthen the capacity of African countries in the area of civil registration and vital statistics. With the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the Africa Programme's secretariat, along with its partners, mounted a major technical assistance programme aimed at providing countries with support to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on civil registration and vital statistics systems and to build back systems that had been adversely affected by the pandemic. This support included undertaking a rapid impact assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic on civil registration operations, in which 35 countries participated; conducting training webinars; and preparing a technical guidance note on maintaining civil registration and vital statistics systems during the pandemic.

29. The Africa Programme further undertook to support countries in implementing the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda. A needs assessment was undertaken in 14 countries: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Zambia. Six of these countries are receiving technical and financial support from the task force for the Legal Identity Agenda, in order to implement the recommended integrated model. The systems improvement framework was designed to provide systematic support to countries in the analysis and design of an efficient civil registration and vital statistics process and in identifying approaches to the creation of an enabling environment for a well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics system. The secretariat has continued to train country experts in use of the tool and to support its implementation.

30. The secretariat of ECA organized an expert group meeting of civil registrars-general in 2021, which, among other activities, reflected on the progress of the continental CRVS programme and provided specific recommendations as to how countries should accelerate progress in the coming years. The expert group also identified priority topics for discussion at the sixth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, scheduled for October 2022. An evaluation of the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems is currently under way, looking into its past ten years of operation and reflecting on key actions that should be undertaken at regional and country levels to accelerate progress in the development of civil registration and vital statistics systems. The results of the evaluation will be used to guide the policy of the programme in the coming years. The new strategic plan will, among other functions, draw on the findings of the programme evaluation and

be guided by policy directives provided by the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration.

31. Over the reporting period, gender statistics activities focused primarily on capacity development in countries provided through online meetings and workshops. Guidelines on mainstreaming gender issues in statistics in support of COVID-19-related decision-making, assessment of the African programme on gender statistics for the period 2017–2021 and development of a new programme for 2022–2026 constitute the key achievements in this area, in addition to the new guidance on integrating a gender-focus in strategic planning for statistics. In addition, the African Development Bank secured some $2 million under the Transition Support Facility for capacity-building for gender statistics and monitoring systems in Burundi, Mozambique, South Sudan and Zimbabwe. The project, which will be executed by ECA, aims at enhancing the capacities of the countries to produce gender statistics and to strengthen gender and monitoring and evaluation systems.

32. Building on the successes of the first phase of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics,[1] 2013–2018, during which 79 scholarships were offered by ECA and FAO to students across 40 countries to pursue their training in agricultural statistics, the two institutions renewed their collaboration early in 2021 for the second phase. This phase provides 50 scholarships at the master's degree level. In addition, the programme plans regional workshops to impart basic theoretical knowledge and skills to data producers, in particular statisticians with no or limited background in agriculture statistics, and to economists or agronomists with basic knowledge in statistics.

33. In collaboration with key partners, the United Nations has worked to strengthen the system of legal identity in a number of countries, including Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, the Niger, Nigeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Zambia. These efforts led to the integration of civil registration and identity management under the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda, linking the health sector to the civil registry and promoting the use of technology for electronic civil registration and vital statistics.

34. Seventy regional United Nations entities, brought together in the Regional Collaborative Platform for Africa, unveiled the Africa United Nations Data for Development Platform designed to bring together all African countries with data and evidence on sustainable development. The platform is to serve as a one-stop-shop repository that captures high-quality data and evidence on the Sustainable Development Goals from all the African countries. It also aims to showcase progress towards achieving the African Union vision for the continent's statistical systems.

35. The first pan-African statistics programme, funded to the tune of €6,885,716 by the European Union through Eurostat over the period January 2016–30 June 2019, was extended to October 2021 with additional resources of €1,000,000. In 2020 and 2021, the programme focused on capacity development and technical assistance in national accounts, leadership training, and implementation of the second Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa. The countries receiving such support include Benin, Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A university course on the African statistical system has also been developed, in close collaboration with the Côte d'Ivoire statistical training centre.

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[1] The strategy was adopted by the Statistics Commission in 2010 for a 15-year period, as a coordinated initiative to address the decline in the agricultural statistical systems in developing countries and to enable the production of good-quality agricultural statistics.

36.   The second Pan-African statistics programme (€7.7 million) was launched in January 2022 for a period of 46 months, to support African Union integration through the improved availability of good-quality statistical information that can facilitate decision-making and policy monitoring. The programme seeks to improve the production, dissemination and quality of statistics in Africa. It will also strengthen the institutional capacity and internal communication and coordination of the African Union and the African statistical system, with the aim of providing comparable statistics needed to underpin the African Union's integration process and measuring African progress towards global goals and targets. The programme is funded by Eurostat on behalf of the European Union.

37.   The European Union also funded two specific grants projects carried out by national statistical offices in the European Union, the first dedicated to social statistics and the second to economic statistics. The social statistics grant (€1.2 million) focuses on training and the piloting of new methodologies; administrative and alternative data sources; population censuses; demographic, health and education statistics; the Sustainable Development Goals; labour force statistics; informal employment; and communication on social statistics. The economic statistics grant (€1.5 million) is targeted at statistical business registers and national accounts. The two grants projects will run until October 2025.

38.   The African Development Bank continued providing technical and financial support for statistical activities in member States to generate the good-quality data needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, while also pursing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Bank's so-called "High-5s" agenda. The statistical activities focused on niche areas representative of regional public goods – namely, those accessible to countries, regional economic communities and pan-African institutions – and were aimed at reinforcing the comparability, harmonization, management and dissemination of the statistics generated. Activities included the provision of technical and financial support to 34 countries to facilitate second-phase data collection on energy, information and communications technology, transport, water, and sanitation; to 21 countries in compiling and publishing the minimum set of up-to-date core agricultural data; and to African Development Bank member countries in the rebasing of their GDP; the validation of price data under the International Comparison Programme; the provision of technical assistance to COMESA and SADC member countries on the compilation and dissemination of the monthly harmonized consumer price index; online assessment of the use of business registers in 39 countries; and participation in writing the World Bank report, *Purchasing Power Parities for Policy Making: A Visual Guide to Using Data from the International Comparison Program*.

III. Takwimu programme

39.   ECA launched the Takwimu[2] Young African Statisticians Programme in July 2021 as the continental network of young statisticians and data practitioners from African national statistical systems, statistical training centres, universities and research centres, and the private sector, including those from national statistical associations and societies. The objective of Takwimu is to create a forum where young African statisticians will serve as the locomotive for transforming and modernizing the African statistical systems.

40.   On 5 July 2021, ECA organized a meeting of young African statisticians to discuss the Takwimu concept note, the programme focus and the strategy for mobilizing young African statisticians from diverse backgrounds. The Takwimu strategy for 2022–2025 was drafted with ECA support. It aims to

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[2] "Takwimu" means "statistics" in Swahili.

mobilize, organize and equip young statisticians on the African continent with the necessary tools and knowledge to contribute to and support the building of a robust statistical system that responds adequately to users' needs.

41. To heighten the exposure and visibility of young African statisticians at international conferences, ECA supported the participation of 10 young African statisticians at the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Kigali, in March 2022. In a comparable initiative, ECA supported the participation of three young African statisticians at the eighteenth Conference of the International Association for Official Statistics in Kraków, Poland, in April 2022. In collaboration with the Association, ECA organized a webinar in November 2021 to mobilize young African statisticians to take an active part in the 2022 international competition for the Association's Prize for Young Statisticians.

42. A side event will be organized at the tenth meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa in October 2022 to determine the composition of the bureau for Takwimu and to discuss and review its draft strategy for 2022–2025.

IV. Response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on national statistical systems

43. As part of a coordinated approach designed to strengthen the response of African countries responses to COVID-19 and to enhance their access to lifesaving health technologies, the United Nations launched the Africa United Nations Knowledge Hub for COVID-19. The hub provides different pathways to the information and knowledge resources that are generated by the United Nations and its partners on the effects of COVID-19 in the region. These knowledge resources include technical reports, impact studies, analyses, data, presidential addresses, government decrees, and news and research papers that are contextualized and harmonized for ease of use and reference.

44. ECA has developed an application on alternative data collection techniques for compiling specific statistics in high demand, such as the consumer price index. It organized regional webinars and e-training workshops and assisted member States in applying web scraping, scanner data, computer-assisted telephone interviews and phone surveys for consumer price index data collection. The ECA Price Watch Centre for Africa was launched as a tool for disseminating price statistics and engaging policymakers in using statistics for decision-making. Support was also provided for integrating geospatial and statistical information and using spatially enabled data for informed decision-making during the COVID-19 crisis. Efforts by African countries to track and visualize the status of COVID-19 were compiled into a compendium of national dashboards and guidelines were prepared for the integration of gender into COVID-19-related statistical activities, to help countries more effectively to mainstream gender issues in their statistical activities.

45. AFRISTAT, ECA, the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century joined forces to organize periodic rounds of operational and methodological webinars during the COVID-19 pandemic aimed at fostering constructive exchanges of experience between national statistical offices in relation to common subjects. To date, seven webinars have been organized on various topics.

46. The African Development Bank has created a $10 billion budget support facility, named the COVID-19 Response Facility, to assist countries in fighting the pandemic. National statistical systems were encouraged to negotiate with their government where possible to use part of these funds for statistical activities. The Bank is also supporting efforts by member countries in Africa to

use technology in the statistical data collection by providing technical assistance in the use of computer-assisted personal interviews and organizing webinars on the Africa Information Highway data management and dissemination portal. In addition, the Bank is hosting national open data platforms on that portal and countries have received support in developing data portals for disseminating COVID-19 statistics and data.

47. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century has developed and published a second online course on communicating gender statistics for statisticians and journalists to support the resilience of national statistics systems during the pandemic. In addition, the Partnership has developed a framework for countries to encourage the reuse of alternative data sources for official reporting.

V. Transformation and modernization of national statistical systems

A. African group on the transformation and modernization of official statistics

48. At its seventh meeting, held from 13 to 15 October 2020, the Statistical Commission for Africa approved the creation of the African group on the transformation and modernization of official statistics, composed of 10 directors general of national statistical offices, and requested that ECA undertake its operationalization.[3] The mission of the group is to strategically guide and coordinate work on the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems in Africa.

49. At its fifty-third session, held on 22 and 23 March 2021, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development welcomed the creation of the group and encouraged it to propose regional guidance and standards for transforming and modernizing national statistical systems.

50. The Bureau of the Statistical Commission for Africa nominated the Group members[4] for a four-year mandate, with due consideration for regional and language representation and the different levels of statistical development of national statistical offices in Africa, to ensure that no national statistical system was left behind.

51. The group adopted its vision, entitled "Modernized statistical systems for a competitive and prosperous Africa"; identified the three main thematic domains for transformation and modernization; and approved the creation of three technical teams to conduct work in these thematic areas, namely:

(a) Digitalization and integration of data science initiatives;

(b) Survey methodology;

(c) Coordination of the national statistical system and statistical legislation (including administrative data systems and other sources).

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[3] See the recommendations of the Statistical Commission for Africa at its seventh meeting, set out in the annex to the report of the meeting, in document E/ECA/STATCOM/7/13.

[4] The group is composed of directors general of the national statistical offices of the following countries:
(a) For Central Africa: Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea;
(b) For East Africa: Kenya and Rwanda;
(c) For North Africa: Egypt (Rapporteur) and Morocco (second Vice-Chair);
(d) For Southern Africa: South Africa (Chair) and Zambia;
(e) For West Africa: Niger (first Vice-Chair) and Nigeria.

B. Reflecting results

52.   As the primary element of the work programme of the technical teams is evaluation of the status of African countries in terms of the transformation and modernization of official statistics, the group's secretariat supported the teams in assessing the national statistical systems in Africa in the three main thematic areas. The assessment report highlighted the areas in which countries should make efforts in each thematic three areas of focus.

53.   A comprehensive report was produced on the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa. In the report, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and political, economic, social, technological and legal factors in the three thematic areas were identified.

54.   ECA has reviewed its work programme, catalysed by the impact of COVID-19 on national statistical systems, to support the modernization of official statistics in the region. To this end, the Commission has launched a leadership programme in statistics, with support from the United Kingdom Office for National Statistics, to equip senior managers of national statistical offices with the skills required to lead their institutions. ECA and the Office conducted a pilot online statistical leadership training programme in March 2021 for the national statistical offices of Ethiopia, Botswana, the Gambia and Lesotho. Following the success of this pilot exercise, a wide online training was organized for French-speaking-African countries from December 2021 to March 2022, in collaboration with the Office for National Statistics and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP). At the national level, a training workshop was organized in March 2022 in Egypt, attended by 28 staff members, three fourths of whom were women.

55.   ECA is supporting the undertaking of digital censuses in Africa by developing and deploying information technology applications that improve the quality, timeliness and efficiency of the data. The technological system that has been developed for digital censuses comprises a census monitoring dashboard, a provisioning tool, an operation tracking system and a census e-question repository. The following countries have received assistance in this regard: Botswana, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Togo, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

56.   ECA has launched a data science campus to provide leadership, set standards and strengthen the capacity of member States to use innovative tools and solutions, methods and techniques in collecting, processing, analysing and disseminating data and statistics to measure national, regional and global development initiatives. A number of capacity-building activities have been carried out in this framework.

57.   On the institutional side, support is being provided to countries in modernizing their statistical legislation and designing and updating national strategies for the development of statistics. Ethiopia and Seychelles have received support in this regard. A road map for the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems in Africa is currently being finalized.

58.   ECA received a grant of €1,981,924 from Eurostat, on behalf of the European Union, as part of the second pan-African statistics programme for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and statistics in Africa. The grant will support the modernization of administrative data and registers for statistical purposes, the integration of GIS and statistical processes, and the centralization of data produced by national statistics stakeholders, with the aim of closing the data gap and enhancing monitoring of the Goals.

VI. Points for decision by the Commission

59. The Statistical Commission for Africa is requested:

(a) To take note of the continuing progress made by African countries, pan-African institutions and other development partners in support of statistical development and the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems in Africa towards the implementation of national, continental and global development agendas;

(b) To approve the creation of the Takwimu Young African Statisticians Programme, with ECA, through the African Centre for Statistics, as its secretariat, and to institutionalize the programme;

(c) To approve the 2022–2025 strategy for the Takwimu Young African Statisticians Programme;

(d) To call upon African countries to officially endorse the Takwimu Young African Statisticians Programme and provide space and necessary support for the proper functioning of the Programme;

(e) To call upon development partners to scale up their support for the African statistical system to ensure its transformation and modernization in response to the growing needs of users.

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