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**for Africa: statutory issues**

### **Proposed medium-term statistics plan of the African Centre for Statistics for the period 2025–2027**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present proposed medium-term statistics plan for 2025–2027 is submitted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to the Statistical Commission for Africa. The purpose of the plan is to guide the contribution that ECA will make to data and statistics in Africa between 2025 and 2027.
2. Following the present introduction, the rationale for the plan is set out in section II. Changes that should be made are explained in section III. Section IV contains a summary of the broad areas of intervention for the period 2025–2026. In section V, potential partnerships between ECA and other pan-African institutions and stakeholders are suggested. Section VI contains a brief discussion of the mobilization of resources needed to implement the activities outlined in the plan. The final section contains a request for the Statistical Commission for Africa to express its views and provide guidance on the conclusions and discussion points.

#### **II. Rationale**

3. ECA developed the present plan to renew its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The plan is designed to be forward-looking, drawing on the resources available to Africa and the continent's comparative advantages and strengths. In drawing up the plan, ECA applied the lessons learned from other initiatives on statistical development in Africa, both in the recent and distant past. Such initiatives include the African Household Survey Capability Programme, implemented between 1978 and 1993; the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s; the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa, completed in 2007; the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, initially launched in 2010 and updated in 2017; the African Charter on Statistics, of which a draft was first adopted in 2009; the Africa Programme on

\* E/ECA/STATCOM/9/2024/1/Rev.1.



Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, launched in 2012; the African Statistical Coordination Committee, established in 2008; the African Action Plan on Global Geospatial Information Management, covering the period from 2016 to 2030; and the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa between 2023 and 2030. The purpose of such efforts has been to modernize and transform official statistics to meet the growing need for data to support development planning and policy formulation.

4. Despite the accomplishments made through such initiatives, the continent still faces a shortage of accessible high-quality data and statistics, which significantly limits evidence-based policymaking and hinders the continent's progress towards attaining fair and prosperous societies and the targets set in national and international programmes. Several root causes – including weak governance and institutions, ineffective leadership within organizations, inadequate policies and laws, resource limitations, poor stakeholder involvement and a lack of political backing – are impeding the production, dissemination and use of trustworthy data. Such issues are compounded by other challenges, such as political instability, a lack of trust, and poor-quality data in national statistical systems. It is therefore urgent to reform and improve data production and management in Africa and to ensure that it is used more effectively for evidence-based governance and policy.

5. The medium-term statistics plan is a strategic approach grounded in the ECA road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa between 2023 and 2030. Through the plan, ECA is aiming to sustain and increase momentum for the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems and to strengthen the African statistical system in the face of current and future challenges. The plan is guided by the mandate of ECA to promote the economic and social development of its members, foster intraregional integration and promote international cooperation for development in Africa. ECA is seeking to achieve the underlying objectives of the plan through the discrete, complementary and core functions and strategic guidance provided to it by the Statistical Commission for Africa in order to deliver support and strengthen collaboration with its members, national statistical offices, regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations. Lessons learned from efforts to tackle coronavirus disease (COVID-19) are reflected in the plan, in which robust and coordinated approaches have been developed or improved upon to build agile and resilient statistical systems. Through the plan, ECA is building on the data, statistics and geospatial information that are already produced, available and used, and it seeks to accelerate the development of new data to ensure that decision-making is backed by data. ECA has based the plan around its three core strategic functions (see the figure) to deliver contemporary and technology-driven statistical transformation and modernization to meet new demands.

Figure

**Core strategic functions of the Economic Commission for Africa**

<i>Core strategic functions</i>		
<i>Convening</i>	<i>Think tank</i>	<i>Operational</i>
Provide dedicated regional intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platforms with strong stewardship by members of ECA, regional bodies and development banks that result in agreed development policy frameworks, standards and action plans.	Conduct multisectoral research and analysis of major statistical challenges facing members of ECA and Africa as a whole, and promote peer learning and development.	Provide direct policy advice and support to members of ECA, national statistical offices, national mapping agencies, regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations through cooperation with other United Nations system entities.

### III. Strengthening data and statistics for evidence-based decision-making

6. The purpose of the plan 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. The plan is built on the following three pillars to achieve this purpose.

(a) *Strong business processes at the country level.* Strong business processes ensure that data production, analysis and dissemination are systematic, reliable and efficient, creating a solid foundation for evidence-based decision-making. Standardized procedures and accountability mechanisms ensure that the quality of data is high, which allows policymakers to trust the data and use the data effectively. In implementing the plan, ECA intends to establish strong business processes in countries and regional economic communities through training events, seminars and technical assistance, equipping stakeholders with up-to-date knowledge and skills to strengthen institutional and individual capabilities and stimulate research and technical work on statistical development. This will lead to innovation in statistical techniques, allowing countries to develop state-of-the-art methods for collecting, processing, disseminating and analysing data.

(b) *Modernization and transformation of statistical systems.* The purpose of this pillar is to upgrade and streamline statistical systems to make them highly efficient and capable of handling contemporary data demands effectively and efficiently, thereby improving overall data quality and usability. By transforming and modernizing their national statistical systems, countries will acquire the technology and skills to meet the needs of their users. Countries need to adopt innovative technologies and techniques that will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their data systems and allow them to collect more accurate data, perform better analysis and disseminate data more widely and more efficiently. By leveraging advanced tools, countries will gain deeper insights and make decisions that are better informed.

(c) *Strong data culture, governance and policy.* The purpose of this pillar is to support effective, evidence-based decision-making, which will be achieved through strong communication and advocacy mechanisms for data users and countries, strong partnerships and a sound legal and regulatory framework. Strong communication will promote the benefits of evidence-based decision-making to raise awareness of the importance and potential impact of data. Strong communication fosters demand for high-quality data and encourages stakeholders to prioritize data-driven approaches. Advocacy efforts will be aimed at strengthening the political desire for improvements, with policymakers committing themselves to using data, having understood the value of doing so, and therefore providing financial resources for statistical development. When strong partnerships are forged, governments, international organizations, private sector entities and civil society organizations will collaborate more effectively, pooling their resources and expertise to enhance data systems. Guidelines and standards for data production and management will form the necessary structure and frameworks to ensure data integrity, security and accessibility.

### IV. Main activities

7. The proposed plan consists of three components derived from the theory of changes proposed in section III, in which the African Centre for Statistics has certain advantages compared with other regional and subregional institutions and national statistical offices. The components support national statistical systems in strengthening the key drivers of the road map for the

transformation and modernization of Africa: putting users first and optimizing resources.

8. Component 1 will strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to harness the opportunities available in the digital era. The main focus of the component will be on updating the knowledge and skills of the African Centre for Statistics and national statistical systems so that they can use the latest methods, technologies and standards in their statistical activities. Research and innovation to support statistical development in Africa will also be part of this component.

9. The focus of component 2 will be on transforming and modernizing the production and dissemination of data to ensure that user needs are properly addressed. Implementation of the component will provide institutions with sound statistical environments and efficient production processes and drive countries towards greater innovation and digitalization.

10. Component 3 concerns the effective use of data and statistics for evidence-base decision-making. Countries will receive technical support to improve their dissemination of data and statistics and to harness the opportunities offered by digital development to facilitate access to data and ensure that data are better understood and used effectively.

11. The table shows the deliverables for the three objectives.

Table

**Results chain**

<i>Goal</i>	- 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
<i>Outcome/result areas/objectives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National statistical systems improve their capacity to harness the opportunities provided by the digital era</li> <li>- The production and dissemination of data and statistics are transformed and modernized to ensure that they properly respond to users' needs</li> <li>- Members of ECA increasingly use official statistics for policymaking and decision-making</li> </ul>
<i>Output/deliverables</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National statistical system organizations that understand the latest methodologies and technologies in statistical production and dissemination</li> <li>- Research and technical work for statistical development</li> <li>- National statistical systems that foster a culture of continuous learning</li> <li>- Innovative development programmes for young statisticians</li> <li>- Strong learning partnerships with pan-African organizations, training institutions and the private sector</li> <li>- National statistical development strategies that mainstream the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa</li> <li>- Generic legal frameworks on official statistics that are contextualized</li> <li>- Modern statistical laws</li> <li>- National statistical systems that implement international standards and recommendations</li> <li>- Suitable infrastructure within national statistical systems to ensure that statistical activities take place</li> <li>- New technologies and methodologies for statistical production and dissemination are used by the stakeholders of national statistical systems</li> <li>- Stronger and more stable financial support for statistical systems</li> </ul>

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- More effective implementation of robust data systems and processes by national statistical systems
  - National statistical systems with transformative leaders
  - Risk mitigation strategies for technological failures
  - National quality assurance frameworks for countries to monitor and improve data quality
  - Strategic decisions on the level, type and timing of digitalization and the integration of statistical systems at the country level
  - New technologies and techniques adopted for using and disseminating data and statistics
  - Suitable data and technological infrastructure in countries
  - Improved data literacy among decision makers
  - Strong communication and partnerships with data users and countries
  - User engagement plans or strategies adopted
  - Modern, user-friendly data dissemination platforms developed and regularly updated
  - Modern data dissemination approaches implemented

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*Activities*

- National and regional seminars and training events relating to national statistical systems
  - Technical assistance missions in member countries
  - Development of guidelines and technical material to build the capacities of data producers and users
  - Advocacy of the adoption of innovative technologies and techniques by national statistical systems and support for the building of suitable data and technological infrastructure to enhance data collection, analysis and dissemination
  - Support for the implementation of national road maps for the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems
  - Research and technical work on statistical development to drive innovation in statistical production and data analysis methods
  - Support for user engagement in national statistical systems
  - Development of supply-use tables, intraregional input-output tables and the trade in value added model
  - Updating and rebasing of gross domestic product
  - Participation of African countries in the global programme to update the 2008 System of National Accounts and test the updates
  - Digital population and housing censuses
  - Establishment of a digital identity platform for Africa
  - Development of geospatial information and knowledge infrastructures
  - Implementation of the African Geodetic Reference Frame
  - Implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework
  - Establishment of a strong data culture and strong data governance and policy in African countries, including sound legal and regulatory frameworks
  - Modernization of national statistical legal frameworks
  - Mainstreaming of the road map for transformation and modernization into national strategies for the development of statistics
  - Advocacy of the importance of official statistics
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- Mobilization of international resources to support the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa
  - Development of data science campuses
  - Support for young African statisticians
  - Improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems
  - Improvement of agricultural and rural statistics
  - Compilation of environmental-economic accounts
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12. The activities carried out under the plan will be centred on country-level technical advisory services and advocacy, expert group meetings, webinars, workshops, other training events, country scoping missions and meetings of such bodies as the Statistical Commission for Africa and the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management. The successful implementation of the activities hinges on the assumptions laid out in the following paragraphs.

(a) *Proactivity (networking)*. Active engagement and networking among stakeholders are essential, as stakeholders need to build relationships, share information and collaborate on establishing best practices.

(b) *An environment that supports innovation*. Political stability, institutional support and a culture that values innovation, data and evidence-based decision-making are crucial to drive innovation and progress.

(c) *Peer-to-peer knowledge transfer*. Effective peer-to-peer knowledge transfer ensures that skills and knowledge are disseminated throughout teams, which, in turn, facilitates capacity-building and the continuous improvement of data systems.

(d) *Sufficient financial resources*. Sufficient funding is essential to ensure investment in infrastructure, capacity-building and ongoing research and development in order to support the various processes and outputs outlined.

(e) *Stakeholder engagement*. Engaging governments, international organizations, private sector partners, civil society organizations and other stakeholders at all levels will ensure broad support for data initiatives.

(f) *Suitable human resources*. Successful data systems require statisticians, geoinformation specialists, data analysts, information technology specialists and other skilled professionals involved in data production and use.

13. The activities will contribute to the implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, and technical expertise provided by ECA will help to ensure that the specialized technical groups formed under the Strategy achieve their objectives. ECA will also 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 II.A), primarily in the management of the United Nations-African online portal on data for development and the implementation of the United Nations data and statistics strategy for Africa.

## V. Stakeholder engagement (key implementing partners)

14. Implementation of this plan requires fit-for-purpose stakeholder engagement to ensure that the programme design, implementation and outcomes of the African Centre for Statistics address the diverse needs and perspectives of stakeholders.

15. ECA will engage with political decision makers, the media, the data science community and the general public to ensure that they use statistics because they better understand the benefits of doing so. Specifically, it will support and spearhead statistical literacy campaigns and produce data products geared towards better communication of statistics. The African Centre for Statistics will engage closely with data enthusiasts and the data science community to synergize efforts with a view to improving the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination processes.

16. Individual and independent data producers, the private sector, the Statistical Commission of the United Nations and other stakeholders will be involved when the subjects directly require their input, but the African Centre for Statistics will monitor them closely and engage them by sharing targeted products that are relevant to their mandates and objectives.

17. During the implementation of the plan, the African Centre for Statistics will consult the regional economic communities, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academia, research institutions, United Nations Resident Coordinator offices and international organizations, especially when the planned activities and engagements are within their area of operation. Stakeholder feedback will be obtained through outreach activities and through such information-sharing platforms as the StatsTalk-Africa webinar series.

18. The African Centre for Statistics will forge better partnerships with national statistical offices; other national statistical system stakeholders; national mapping agencies; civil registration and vital statistics entities; pan-African institutions, such as the African Union Institute for Statistics and the African Development Bank; policymakers; the Statistical Commission for Africa; the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development; the senior leadership team of ECA; the divisions and subregional offices of ECA; the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning; United Nations funds and programmes; donors; bilateral and multilateral partners; and the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral development banks. In line with the objectives of the plan, deeper engagements will be explored with these stakeholders to attract technical and financial support, to provide clear information on the progress made, and to request feedback in order to improve processes and make implementation of the plan more effective and more efficient.

## **VI. Resource mobilization**

19. As it has done previously, 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 for implementation of the full range of activities, however, is still dependent on the mobilization of extrabudgetary resources. ECA will approach its partners to mobilize resources to support the subprogramme on data and statistics. ECA and its partners – the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank – will develop synergies, including cost-sharing approaches for important activities leading to the transformation and modernization of statistical systems.

## **VII. Conclusion and discussion points**

20. The plan is expected to improve the uptake of data, statistics and geospatial information management and lead to closer collaboration among the various components and stakeholders of national statistical systems and better-coordinated geospatial data infrastructure. The processes for producing, analysing, disseminating and using statistics and spatial information will also

benefit from additional commitments, investment and a sense of ownership by national statistical offices and senior government officials. Furthermore, the steps taken under the plan will improve data-collection approaches and methodologies as well as the processing, analysis and dissemination of up-to-date data by national statistical systems using modern methods. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 will also improve.

21. The Statistical Commission for Africa is requested:

- (a) To express its views on the plan;
  - (b) To endorse the plan and to request that ECA, other pan-African organizations and development partners mobilize sufficient resources for its implementation.
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