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**Statistical programme of the Economic Commission
for Africa: statutory issues****Progress report on the implementation of the
medium-term statistics plan of the African Centre for
Statistics for the period 2025–2027****I. Introduction**

1. This report presents the progress made in implementing the medium-term statistics plan of the African Centre for Statistics for the period 2025–2027, focusing on achievements, challenges and lessons learned during the period 2025–2026. It assesses progress made by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in fulfilling its strategic mandate to improve the production, dissemination and use of credible data, statistics and geospatial information across Africa.

2. The medium-term statistics plan, endorsed by the Statistical Commission for Africa at its ninth session, held in 2024, was developed to guide the work of ECA in the area of data and statistics in Africa during the period 2025–2027. The plan is grounded in the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa between 2023 and 2030 and is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. It responds to the persistent shortage of accessible, high-quality data and statistics, which limits evidence-based policymaking and hinders the continent's progress towards achieving its development priorities.

3. Following the present introduction, an overview of the strategic framework of the plan and the deliverables under its three components is provided in section II. The implications of the UN80 Initiative for the strategic direction of the African Centre for Statistics and the relevance of medium-term plans as strategic planning instruments are discussed in section III. Section IV contains an assessment of progress against the deliverables under the three components of the plan and presents the main outputs and outcomes by area of statistical work. Challenges encountered and lessons learned in implementing the plan are described in section V. Section VI contains a discussion of the alignment of the plan with the ECA programme plan and budget cycle. Section VII contains points for consideration by the Statistical Commission for Africa concerning medium-term planning and emerging priorities for statistical development.

4. The present report is submitted to the Statistical Commission for Africa to provide an update on progress in implementing the plan, inform any

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necessary strategic adjustments and support resource mobilization for the continued transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa.

II. Overview of the medium-term statistics plan

5. The medium-term statistics plan for the period 2025–2027 is designed to guide the work of ECA in the area of data and statistics in Africa over the three-year period. It was developed to renew the commitment of ECA to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, while drawing on lessons learned from past statistical development initiatives on the continent. The plan builds on those initiatives by supporting the transformation and modernization of official statistics to meet the growing need for data for development planning and policymaking.

A. Strategic purpose and guiding principles

6. The overarching 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 three strategic pillars to achieve this purpose:

- (a) Strong business processes at the country level to ensure systematic, reliable and efficient data production and dissemination;
- (b) Modernization and transformation of statistical systems through the adoption of innovative technologies and methodologies;
- (c) Strong data culture, governance and policy to promote the effective use of statistics in decision-making.

7. 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. It is based on the three core strategic functions of ECA – its convening function, its function as a think tank and its operational function – and reflects lessons learned from efforts to tackle the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including the need to adopt robust and coordinated approaches in order to build agile and resilient statistical systems. Implementation of the plan is organized around three components:

Component 1: National statistical systems improve their capacity to harness the opportunities provided by the digital era

8. Under component 1, the focus is on strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems to harness opportunities in the digital era. This includes updating the knowledge and skills of national statistical systems so that they can apply the latest methods, technologies and standards in their statistical activities. The main deliverables include national statistical system organizations that understand the latest methodologies and technologies in statistical production and dissemination; research and technical work for statistical development; national statistical systems that foster a culture of continuous learning; innovative development programmes for young statisticians; and strong learning partnerships with pan-African organizations, training institutions and the private sector.

Component 2: The production and dissemination of data and statistics are transformed and modernized to ensure that they properly respond to users' needs

9. Under component 2, the focus is on transforming and modernizing the production and dissemination of data to address user needs. The main deliverables include national statistical development strategies that mainstream the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa; contextualized generic legal frameworks on official statistics; modern statistical laws; national statistical systems that implement international standards and recommendations; suitable infrastructure within national statistical systems to ensure that statistical activities take place; the use of new technologies and methodologies for statistical production and dissemination; stronger and more stable financial support for statistical systems; more effective implementation of robust data systems and processes; transformative leadership of national statistical systems; risk mitigation strategies for technological failures; national quality assurance frameworks; and strategic decisions on the digitalization and integration of statistical systems at the country level.

Component 3: Members of ECA increasingly use official statistics for policymaking and decision-making

10. Under component 3, the focus is on the effective use of data and statistics for evidence-based decision-making, with particular emphasis on improving data dissemination and harnessing the opportunities presented by digital development. Key deliverables include new technologies and techniques for using and disseminating data and statistics; suitable data and technological infrastructure within countries; improved data literacy among decision makers; strong communication and partnerships with data users and countries; user engagement plans or strategies; modern, user-friendly data dissemination platforms; and modern data dissemination approaches.

11. A comprehensive set of activities to achieve the above deliverables is also set out in the medium-term statistics plan. Those activities provide the main basis for assessing progress in the implementation of the plan.

B. Assumptions, stakeholder engagement and need for additional resources

12. Successful implementation of the plan hinges on the following assumptions: proactive networking among stakeholders; an environment that supports innovation; effective peer-to-peer knowledge transfer; sufficient financial resources; broad stakeholder engagement; and suitable human resources. Fit-for-purpose engagement with a range of stakeholders will be needed, including with political decision makers, the media, the data science community, data producers, the private sector, regional economic communities, civil society, academia and pan-African institutions such as the African Union Institute for Statistics and the African Development Bank.

13. ECA will allocate resources from its regular annual budget to cover expert group meetings, consultancy services and technical assistance missions. Additional resources will, however, be needed for the full implementation of the plan. ECA will work with partners, including the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, to mobilize extrabudgetary resources and develop synergies, including through cost-sharing arrangements, to support the transformation and modernization of statistical systems.

III. United Nations reform and implications for the implementation of the medium-term statistics plan

A. United Nations reform: rationale and objectives

14. In March 2025, the Secretary-General launched the UN80 Initiative as a deliberate, system-wide reform effort to mark the eightieth anniversary of the United Nations. The Initiative was launched against a backdrop of deep geopolitical divisions, a sharp contraction in the resources available for multilateralism and a widening gap between what the United Nations system is expected to deliver and the resources at its disposal. Between 2024 and 2025, total international assistance fell by 23 per cent – the largest decline on record – while core contributions to the United Nations system from members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development fell by 27 per cent. The purpose of the Initiative is not cost-cutting or austerity for its own sake but, as stated by the Secretary-General, to achieve “a paradigm shift in how the United Nations system organizes its work and collaborates for greater impact”.

15. The Initiative is organized around three mutually reinforcing workstreams that together cover the full mandate life cycle, from creation and resourcing to implementation, impact and review:

(a) Change begins at the centre: reform begins with the United Nations Secretariat, with measures to simplify administrative processes, consolidate support services, reduce duplication, improve the stewardship of resources and relocate functions where appropriate;

(b) Mandate discipline strengthens stewardship: Member States and the Secretariat are provided with new tools to manage mandates more coherently across the full mandate life cycle, giving Member States a better understanding of how mandates are created, resourced, implemented, reported on and reviewed;

(c) System-wide delivery arrangements must match today’s needs: consideration is given to modifying country and regional arrangements, strengthening shared services and technology and data platforms and merging, consolidating or transitioning specific United Nations entities, with a view to aligning institutional structures more closely with current mandates and resource realities.

16. For entities across the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, the practical implications of workstreams 1 and 3 include reductions in posts and budgets and the expectation that remaining structures be reorganized in a manner that clarifies mandates, reduces fragmentation and strengthens the focus on measurable results and policy impact.

B. Impact of the UN80 Initiative on the African Centre for Statistics

17. The African Centre for Statistics has not been insulated from the ongoing system-wide realignment. As part of the budgetary and staffing adjustments associated with the UN80 Initiative, the Centre has absorbed reductions in both human and financial resources during the implementation of the medium-term statistics plan. Rather than allowing those constraints to undermine established functions, however, the leadership of the Centre is treating the current situation as a unique and, in many respects, unprecedented opportunity to reorganize the Centre in line with its vision and mission and with emerging trends in data and statistics for development.

18. The most visible outcome of that process is the consolidation of the four substantive sections of the Centre into three interlinked sections under the Office of the Director:

(a) The Data Capability and Geospatial Knowledge Section, which deals with data systems and governance, data analytics and innovation and integrated geospatial knowledge infrastructure;

(b) The Statistical Production, Methods and Research Section, which deals with statistical products, statistical methods and professional standards and statistical research and innovation;

(c) The Coordination, Partnerships and Policy Outreach Section, which deals with national and regional strategy harmonization, coordination and technical guidance and partnerships, advocacy and policy outreach.

19. The consolidation was guided by six commitments:

(a) To strengthen the alignment of the work of the African Centre for Statistics with the mandate of ECA, the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, the UN80 Initiative and the UN 2.0 Action Plan;

(b) To reduce overlap and fragmentation by establishing cohesive sections with clear roles and lines of accountability;

(c) To strengthen the ability of the Centre to adapt to emerging data trends and technologies;

(d) To shift the focus of the Centre from outputs to outcomes and policy impact;

(e) To strengthen collaboration with members of ECA, regional organizations, academia and private sector data actors;

(f) To respond more effectively to existing and emerging data and statistics needs of members of ECA.

20. Thematic working groups spanning the three sections are also being established to address cross-cutting functions related to data and statistical production, capacity development, research and outreach that do not fall clearly within the remit of a single section.

21. Under the approved staffing proposal, the reorganized Centre comprises 36 posts allocated among the three sections. The reduction in staffing is consistent with the broader changes under the UN80 Initiative and means that the Centre is expected to fulfil its mandate, including implementation of the Medium-term statistics plan, with a smaller, reorganized workforce compared with that in place when the plan was endorsed by the Statistical Commission for Africa in November 2024.

C. Relevance of medium-terms plans as strategic planning instruments for the African Centre for Statistics

22. Medium-term plans are useful strategic planning instruments for the Centre because they are negotiated with and endorsed directly by the Statistical Commission for Africa, which has a specialized mandate in the area of statistics. A three-year or longer planning horizon also reflects the time required for statistical research, the development of statistical solutions and capacity development. For example, the strengthening of civil registration and vital statistics systems, transitions to new versions of the System of National Accounts and the preparation and conduct of population and housing censuses, which generally take place at 10-year intervals, do not fit naturally within two-year planning cycles. A dedicated medium-term plan therefore enables the African Centre for Statistics to sequence its work coherently rather than reset

its strategic direction with each budget cycle. Medium-term planning also facilitates alignment with multi-year continental instruments, including Agenda 2063, the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa for the period 2017–2026 and the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa between 2023 and 2030. It enables the Centre to track its contribution to those instruments and provides development partners with a strategic framework endorsed by the Statistical Commission around which resources can be mobilized.

IV. Progress on the plan's deliverables

A. Status of implementation of deliverables under the medium-term statistics plan in 2025–2026

23. Tables 1 to 3 provide an overview of progress in implementing the deliverables under the three components of the medium-term statistics plan since January 2025. An estimated completion rate and the implementation status of each deliverable are given, together with an overall estimated completion rate for each component. Although the estimates should not be regarded as audited or endorsed performance indicators, they reveal that, overall, steady, broad-based progress has been achieved.

Table 1

Progress on deliverables under component 1 – National statistical systems improve their capacity to harness the opportunities provided by the digital era

<i>Deliverable</i>	<i>Estimated completion rate (percentage)</i>	<i>Status^a</i>
National statistical system organizations that understand the latest methodologies and technologies in statistical production and dissemination	55	Under way
Research and technical work for statistical development	55	Under way
National statistical systems that foster a culture of continuous learning	45	Under way
Innovative development programmes for young statisticians	55	Under way
Strong learning partnerships with pan-African organizations, training institutions and the private sector	65	Substantial progress
Estimated overall completion rate for component 1 (five deliverables): 55 per cent		

Sources: Author's elaboration on the basis of data contained in various internal accountability reports, ambassador briefs on the achievements of the African Centre for Statistics and the statistical capacity development reports.

^a Not yet meaningfully started = completion rate of less than 20 per cent (pink); early stage = completion rate of 20–39 per cent (orange); under way = completion rate of 40–59 per cent (yellow); substantial progress = completion rate of 60–79 per cent (green).

Table 2

Progress on deliverables under component 2: The production and dissemination of data and statistics are transformed and modernized to ensure that they properly respond to users' needs

<i>Deliverable</i>	<i>Estimated completion rate (percentage)</i>	<i>Status^a</i>
National statistical development strategies that mainstream the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa	30	Early stage
Generic legal frameworks on official statistics that are contextualized	20	Early stage
Modern statistical laws	30	Early stage
National statistical systems that implement international standards and recommendations	40	Under way
Suitable infrastructure within national statistical systems to ensure that statistical activities take place	35	Early stage
New technologies and methodologies for statistical production and dissemination are used by the stakeholders of national statistical systems	45	Under way
Stronger and more stable financial support for statistical systems	15	Not yet meaningfully started
More effective implementation of robust data systems and processes by national statistical systems	40	Under way
National statistical systems with transformative leaders	25	Early stage
Risk mitigation strategies for technological failures	5	Not yet meaningfully started
National quality assurance frameworks for countries to monitor and improve data quality	35	Early stage
Strategic decisions on the level, type and timing of digitalization and the integration of statistical systems at the country level	40	Under way
Estimated overall completion rate for component 2 (12 deliverables): 30 per cent		

Sources: Author's elaboration on the basis of data contained in various internal accountability reports, ambassador briefs on the achievements of the African Centre for Statistics and the statistical capacity development reports.

^a Not yet meaningfully started = completion rate of less than 20 per cent (pink); early stage = completion rate of 20–39 per cent (orange); under way = completion rate of 40–59 per cent (yellow); substantial progress = completion rate of 60–79 per cent (green).

Table 3

Progress on deliverables under component 3 – Members of ECA increasingly use official statistics for policymaking and decision-making

<i>Deliverable</i>	<i>Estimated completion rate (percentage)</i>	<i>Status^a</i>
New technologies and techniques adopted for using and disseminating data and statistics	55	Under way
Suitable data and technological infrastructure in countries	35	Early stage
Improved data literacy among decision makers	25	Early stage
Strong communication and partnerships with data users and countries	55	Under way
User engagement plans or strategies adopted	20	Early stage
Modern, user-friendly data dissemination platforms developed and regularly updated	60	Substantial progress
Modern data dissemination approaches implemented	50	Under way
Estimated overall completion rate for component 3 (seven deliverables): 43 per cent		

Sources: Author's elaboration on the basis of data contained in various internal accountability reports, ambassador briefs on the achievements of the African Centre for Statistics and the statistical capacity development reports.

^a Not yet meaningfully started = completion rate of less than 20 per cent (pink); early stage = completion rate of 20–39 per cent (orange); under way = completion rate of 40–59 per cent (yellow); substantial progress = completion rate of 60–79 per cent (green).

B. Achievements by area of statistical work

1. Strengthening data governance and statistical systems

24. The African Centre for Statistics has supported countries in translating the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics in Africa between 2023 and 2030 into national legal, institutional and planning instruments and in establishing the foundations for data governance – including quality assurance, data ethics and data-sharing arrangements – needed for modern statistical systems.

Outputs

25. The following outputs were recorded during the reporting period:

- (a) Validated national quality assurance framework and diagnostic report for Togo;
- (b) South Sudan data maturity assessment report and draft national statistical system assessment, which contributed to the development of the country's second national strategy for the development of statistics;
- (c) Revised statistics legislation in Burundi, strengthening the independence of the National Institute of Statistics of Burundi;
- (d) Mid-term review report on the Seychelles National Strategic Plan for Statistics, 2023–2027, including governance recommendations;
- (e) Reviewed applied statistics curriculum at the University of Juba.

Outcomes and early results

26. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

- (a) The validated diagnostic report for Togo contains an assessment of statistical system governance, which was awarded a score of 42 per cent,

providing a measurable baseline for future improvement. A clear road map for completion of the national quality assurance framework has also been agreed;

(b) The data maturity assessment for South Sudan provides an evidence base for the development of the country's second national strategy for the development of statistics and the prioritization of institutional strengthening;

(c) Revised legislation in Burundi strengthens the professional independence and mandate of the National Institute of Statistics of Burundi;

(d) The mid-term review of the Seychelles National Strategic Plan for Statistics 2023–2027 has confirmed the overall soundness of the Plan and identified specific governance gaps to be addressed.

2. Economic and agricultural statistics

27. Work on economic statistics was focused on supporting countries in implementing the 2008 System of National Accounts, rebasing and updating gross domestic product (GDP) compilations and developing supply-use tables and input-output tables for the assessment of intraregional trade and trade in value added. Work on agricultural statistics focused on advancing the use of earth-observation and administrative data.

Outputs

28. The following outputs were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) Validated national road maps and diagnostic assessments for GDP rebasing in Eritrea and Togo;

(b) A semi-automated system for compiling the African Continental Input-Output Table and trade-in-value-added indicators covering more than 25 African economies;

(c) Technical newsletters, GDP nowcasting case studies and web-scraping protocols disseminated to more than 1,000 stakeholders through the United Nations Regional Hub for Big Data and Data Science in Africa;

(d) A bureau and 2026–2027 action plan for the Specialized Technical Group on Infrastructure, Industries and Tourism;

(e) A high-level workshop on the transition to the Integrated Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual, Seventh Edition and the 2025 System of National Accounts, held jointly by ECA, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Union Institute for Statistics to support African States in preparing for the implementation of the updated macroeconomic statistical standards. The workshop participants assessed the preparedness and capacity development needs of States, identified priorities and resource requirements and supported the development of implementation strategies.

Outcomes and early results

29. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) More than 15 countries have received targeted support for the transition to the 2008 System of National Accounts, with Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone achieving compliance with the 2008 System during the reporting period;

(b) The computation tool for the African Continental Input-Output Table has enabled participating countries to move from largely manual, ad hoc trade-in-value-added analysis to a semi-automated, repeatable process. Data

from more than 20 countries have been incorporated and trade-in-value-added indicators computed;

(c) The process to develop a strategy for the transition of African countries to the 2025 System of National Accounts has begun. In addition, the African Development Bank has initiated an assessment of countries' preparedness to incorporate natural capital into their national accounts, and is working in partnership with ECA and the African Union Institute for Statistics to consider the development of practical methodological guidance aligned with the 2025 System.

3. Social and demographic statistics

30. Work on social and demographic statistics has supported the transition from paper-based to digital population and housing censuses in preparation for the 2030 census round and strengthened civil registration and vital statistics systems and gender statistics in support of inclusive, evidence-based policymaking.

Outputs

31. The following outputs were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) Census monitoring dashboards and digital data-collection systems deployed in countries piloting or preparing for the 2030 census round;

(b) A practitioners' guide on digital civil registration and vital statistics systems, five policy briefs and the African Electronic Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Shared Asset initiative;

(c) Guidelines on Migration and Displacement Statistics in Africa, issued by the African Union Institute for Statistics in December 2025, to which the African Centre for Statistics contributed;

(d) Rwanda Vital Statistics Report 2025 and the first vital statistics report for Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania;

(e) A 2026–2028 gender statistics action plan for Burundi and a gender situation analysis report for South Sudan.

Outcomes and early results

32. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) A number of countries, including Botswana and Malawi, conducted their first fully digital agricultural or population censuses, improving the timeliness and quality of the resulting data;

(b) Researchers participating in the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Applied Research Training Initiative and in inequality assessments progressed from data analysis to manuscript preparation and submission to journals, contributing to a growing pool of civil registration and vital statistics research expertise in Africa;

(c) Women accounted for more than one third of participants in the continental population and housing census workshop, reflecting efforts to promote inclusive capacity development.

4. Geospatial information, data integration and environmental statistics

33. Work on geospatial information has focused on implementing the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework at the country level, modernizing geodetic infrastructure in Africa and strengthening the technical capacity needed to integrate earth-observation data with official statistics and environmental accounting.

Outputs

34. The following outputs were recorded during the reporting period:

- (a) Guidelines on the pseudonymization of Global Positioning System coordinates;
- (b) Three flagship reports prepared for the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management on:
 - (i) Geospatial information management by the Statistical Commission for Africa and by the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee for Africa;
 - (ii) Integration of geospatial and statistical data;
 - (iii) Availability of geospatial datasets for monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (c) A validated national action plan for integrated geospatial information management in Mali;
- (d) A 2026–2031 action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework in Eritrea;
- (e) Updated and validated secondary administrative-level boundaries for Mozambique.

Outcomes and early results

35. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

- (a) Post-training assessments in Eritrea showed an average increase of 56 per cent in participants' geospatial competency, with participants applying their skills in practical projects on invasive-species monitoring, dam-site analysis and the modernization of cadastral systems;
- (b) In Mali, a preliminary draft geospatial action plan has been developed into a validated plan through an inclusive, multi-stakeholder consultation process;
- (c) Continental coordination has been strengthened through the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Regional Committee for Africa, with an increased regional focus on integrating geospatial data into statistical systems.

5. Data innovation, digitalization and big data

36. The African Centre for Statistics has promoted and supported the development of digital and data science infrastructure to enable national statistical systems in Africa to make greater use of alternative data sources, automation and artificial intelligence, while strengthening data science skills among statisticians.

Outputs

37. The following output was recorded during the reporting period:

Regional Data Commons for Africa pilot environment.

Outcomes and early results

38. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

- (a) The ECASStats Mobile Application has increased access to African development data among the public and policymakers, complementing traditional publications and dashboards;

(b) The Performance Management Dashboard developed for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malawi has replaced the paper-based, siloed performance tracking system with an integrated, data-driven system;

(c) Statisticians from across Africa have received practical training in modern data science tools, including Python, machine learning and web scraping.

6. Data dissemination and communication

39. Work on data dissemination and communication has focused on improving access to and use of statistics in Africa through interoperable platforms for reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals, interactive analytical dashboards and advocacy on the importance of official statistics.

Outputs

40. The following outputs were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) Africa Sustainable Development Goals Progress Tracker, a live online platform covering all 17 Goals and 169 targets;

(b) Africa Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report and periodic Africa Statistics Flash bulletins;

(c) Interactive Power BI dashboards on consumer prices and inflation and on intra-African trade;

(d) Road maps for the launch of national Sustainable Development Goals dashboards in seven pilot countries;

(e) Publicly available ECASStats Mobile Application;

(f) A performance management dashboard for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malawi.

Outcomes and early results

41. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) Forty-one countries are now able to implement National Summary Data Pages in accordance with IMF data dissemination standards. Mauritius became the first African country to subscribe to the IMF Special Data Dissemination Standard Plus, following capacity development on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange and the Open Data Platform across the region;

(b) Interactive dashboards on inflation and trade have made previously static data more readily accessible to policymakers and analysts. For example, the dashboards show that intra-African trade was valued at \$185.7 billion in 2023 and that only 15.5 per cent of African exports remained within the continent;

(c) ECA advocacy on data sovereignty has brought barriers to accessing donor-financed survey data to the attention of statistical coordination bodies in the United Nations system.

7. Partnerships and resource mobilization

42. Recognizing that implementation of the medium-term statistics plan requires resources beyond the ECA regular budget, the African Centre for Statistics has strengthened partnerships to mobilize additional resources, draw on complementary technical expertise and support continental coordination on statistical capacity development.

Outputs

43. The following outputs were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) Multi-year workplans with the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the East African Community, Vital Strategies and Bloomberg Philanthropies;

(b) Joint technical products developed with partners across the areas of work described above, including guides, dashboards and assessments.

Outcomes and early results

44. The following outcomes and early results were recorded during the reporting period:

(a) Partnerships have extended the technical reach of the African Centre for Statistics beyond what could be achieved through the ECA regular budget alone. In particular, collaboration with the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom has supported the provision of assistance on economic statistics to more than a dozen countries;

(b) The arrangement whereby the secretariat functions for the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa are collectively ensured by ECA, the African Union Institute for Statistics and the African Development Bank has helped to strengthen continental coordination and to align the efforts of partners under the Strategy, reducing the risk of duplication;

(c) Thirty per cent of the additional funding required has been mobilized for civil registration and vital statistics, the Regional Data Commons for Africa and capacity development in agricultural statistics.

45. While substantive results have been achieved to date, further progress is needed, in particular with regard to the broader endorsement or implementation of the principles underlying national quality assurance frameworks, suitable infrastructure within national statistical systems, national statistical development strategies that incorporate the road map for the transformation and modernization of official statistics between 2023 and 2030, and suitable data and technological infrastructure in African countries. Other outputs require further research and consultation before they are sufficiently developed at the continental level to be implemented at the country level. These include generic legal frameworks on official statistics, templates for modern laws on statistics, models and mechanisms for strengthening financial support for statistical systems, practical examples and principles of transformative leadership in national statistical systems, and improved data literacy among decision makers.

V. Challenges and lessons learned

A. Institutional, technical and financial constraints

46. Three cross-cutting constraints affect all seven areas of work. First, there are institutional and financial constraints, as many national statistical systems continue to operate with limited institutional capacity and modest domestic budget allocations for statistics, resulting in a high dependence on external financing. This leaves multi-year reforms, such as transitions between systems of national accounts and the implementation of national quality assurance frameworks, vulnerable to funding interruptions. Second, there are technical constraints, as fragmented and outdated information technology infrastructure, unreliable connectivity and limited access to modern statistical and geospatial technologies reduce the efficiency of data collection, processing and dissemination, particularly in fragile contexts and remote areas. Third, there are

data governance constraints, as weak legal, institutional and operational frameworks for data-sharing, confidentiality and interoperability continue to hinder the integration of administrative, civil registration and geospatial data into official statistics.

47. These cross-cutting constraints are reflected in the following specific challenges:

(a) Heavy reliance on extrabudgetary financing, with short-term and unpredictable partner funding making it difficult to sustain multi-year reforms;

(b) Shortages of professionals with advanced skills in data science, artificial intelligence, big data analytics and classification management;

(c) Weak inter-agency data-sharing arrangements between national statistical offices and producers of administrative data, including civil registration authorities;

(d) Uncertainty regarding the sustainability of digital infrastructure introduced through short-term training interventions once support from the African Centre for Statistics and the provision of equipment end.

B. Lessons for improving implementation in 2026–2027

48. Several lessons from the first reporting period are informing implementation during the remaining two years of the medium-term statistics plan. First, foundational training alone is not sufficient, because countries require sustained follow-up support to apply new tools, address remaining data gaps and update statistical development strategies. Metadata and microdata management also need to be treated as ongoing core functions rather than one-off deliverables. Second, regional initiatives and institutions, such as the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre and the Integrated Regional Platform for the Innovative Use of Earth Observations Technology and Farmer Registry for the Production and Validation of Crop Data, have proved important for scaling up standardized approaches across countries and should be further strengthened. Third, continued senior-level advocacy is needed to secure sustained domestic financing and institutional ownership of statistical modernization rather than being treated as a one-time donor-funded project. Finally, innovations involving confidential data, such as statistical disclosure control for census microdata, require a careful balance between data utility and confidentiality and should be scaled up gradually with appropriate technical safeguards.

VI. Alignment of the medium-term statistics plan with the programme plan and budget cycle of the Economic Commission for Africa

49. Important progress has been made during the first half of the medium-term statistics plan across its three components and various areas of statistical work, supported by the mobilization of resources and implementation efforts. The achievements made to date need to be consolidated in order to strengthen the systems, institutions, processes and infrastructure required to respond effectively to the data and statistical needs of policymakers and other data users.

50. At the programmatic level, the remaining period of the plan overlaps with the United Nations programme planning and budget cycles for 2027 and 2028. The remaining priorities of the plan will therefore be incorporated into the ECA statistical results area in the programme plans and budgets for those years.

51. The medium-term statistics plan for 2025–2027 was designed and endorsed by the Statistical Commission for Africa at its ninth session as a three-year strategic framework running until the end of 2027. By contrast, United Nations programme plans and budgets are prepared and approved annually. The remaining period of the plan therefore overlaps with the programme planning and budget cycles for 2027 and 2028. Priorities of the plan that remain outstanding at the end of 2026 are carried forward, not as a separate work programme, but as deliverables, indicators and expected accomplishments within the ECA statistical results area for the relevant programme planning and budget cycle.

52. In practice, this alignment represents a continuation of work already under way. As described in section III, the restructuring of the African Centre for Statistics included a systematic mapping of the deliverables under subprogramme 4 on data and statistics to new sections and units of the Centre. A similar approach will be applied in aligning the medium-term statistics plan with the programme planning and budget cycles for 2027 and 2028. Outstanding priorities of the plan will be reviewed against the categories used in the proposed programme budgets – parliamentary documentation, substantive services for meetings, field and technical cooperation projects, training events, publications and technical materials – and, where still relevant, reflected in specific deliverables, indicators of achievement and associated resource requirements. Deliverables that have already been completed, as reported in section IV, will not be carried forward, while those still in progress and emerging priorities will be incorporated, as appropriate, into subsequent programme plans and budgets through the regular ECA programme planning process. That process will also take account of the mandate-related requirements of the UN80 Initiative described above. The medium-term statistics plan thus provides a basis both for programme planning and budgeting and for longer-term cooperation with partners and resource mobilization.

VII. Decision points for the Statistical Commission

53. The Statistical Commission for Africa is invited to:

- (a) Take note of the progress made in implementing the medium-term statistics plan for 2025–2027 and provide guidance on the continued use of medium-term statistics plans as strategic planning and resource mobilization instruments in support of the ECA mandate on statistical development; and
- (b) Provide guidance on emerging issues that could constitute priorities for statistical development over the next three to five years.