

Statistical Commission
Forty-fourth session
26 February – 1 March 2013
Item 3(m) of the provisional agenda
Regional statistical development in Africa

Background document
Available in Arabic, English
French and Portuguese

African Charter on Statistics

Prepared by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)



African Union Commission

**AFRICAN CHARTER ON
STATISTICS**

FOREWORD

The use of harmonized and reliable statistics in all fields of political, social, economic and cultural activity is recommended for the monitoring of the implementation of the ongoing integration process in the continent on which African States embarked several years back. This will make it possible for the process to achieve its objectives and for its outcomes to be assessed.

Statistical information has become a vital and indispensable tool in the regional and continental integration process.

Although there has been significant progress in Africa's statistical system over the last years with the advent of several initiatives, it should be pointed out that there is an immense gap between the supply and demand for statistical information needed for development and for the African integration process. For the moment, quality statistical data produced by the African statistical system is virtually inexistent.

It is to remedy this shortfall, which is a setback to Africa's integration and development processes, that the decision-making organs of the African Union took the historic step to call for the elaboration of an African Charter on Statistics, which will serve not only as a legal instrument to regulate statistical activity but also as a tool for advocacy and the development of statistics in Africa.

The consensual document, in whose preparation all members of the African statistical system, African political authorities and development partners fully participated, constitutes a guiding strategic framework that will enable the emergence of reference African statistics. It stands as a code of professional ethics and best practices for the exercise of the profession of statistician in Africa. In this respect, the Charter requires all professional statisticians in Africa to respect the principles laid down in it as well as international standards and concepts in order to allow international comparison. It further urges providers, producers and users of statistical data to collaborate more closely and effectively in order to enhance the quality and usefulness of statistical information.

The Charter also beckons African policy makers to base the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies on facts observed. Statistics should be considered as an essential public asset in any decision-making process.

Since the effective and efficient implementation of the Charter requires financial resources and institutional capacity building for the African statistical system, I hereby request African States to assume their responsibility and guarantee stable and adequate financing of statistical activities. They should also strengthen the independence and status of national institutes of

statistics as well as regional and continental statistics services. The effective implementation of the Charter should make it possible to enhance the coordination of statistics and the effective functioning of Africa's statistical system as well as to avoid duplication in African statistical programmes.

I therefore invite African States to take ownership of the Charter, and fervently appeal to all development partners to lend support to this pace-setting initiative aimed at fostering development in Africa.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jean Ping
Chairperson of the Commission

PREAMBLE

We, Member States of the African Union,

CONSIDERING the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) adopted in Lomé, Togo, on 11 July 2000;

GUIDED by Member States' unambiguous and shared vision on the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community adopted in Abuja, Nigeria, in 1991, with the aim of promoting economic, social, cultural and self-sustained development, as well as integration of African economies;

CONVINCED of the need to speed up the process of implementation of the aforesaid Treaty;

AWARE that the decisions and new policy guidelines of the African Union for accelerating Africa's integration process, and the commitments to implement development programmes and combat poverty should be based on clear evidence and therefore require a robust statistical data system which provides reliable, comprehensive and harmonized statistical information on the continent;

CONSIDERING that statistical information is vital for decision-making by all components of the society, particularly policy makers as well as economic and social players, and is therefore essential for the continent's integration and sustainable development;

AWARE of the need to enhance coordination of statistical activities in the continent;

NOTING that public confidence in official statistical information is premised, to a large extent, on respect for basic democratic values and principles;

NOTING ALSO that the quality of the official statistical information available to public administrations and other activity areas largely depends to a large extent on effective collaboration between statistical data providers, producers and users;

NOTING FURTHER that the professional and social responsibility as well as the credibility of African statisticians demand not only technical skills and capacities, but also respect for the fundamental principles of official statistics, professional ethics and good practices;

RECALLING the adoption of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa by the Conference of Ministers in charge of Social and Economic Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 1990;

RECALLING ALSO the United Nations Statistical Commission's Resolution on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics adopted in April 1994;

REFERRING to the professional code of ethics adopted by the International Statistics Institute (ISI) at its 45th session in August 1985;

RECALLING that adoption and the implementation of international standards, norms and concepts are essential for making comparisons between countries, and thus constitute a prerequisite for the production of comparable statistics at continental level;

RECALLING ALSO that the majority of countries have acceded to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) or to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), and the standards regarding the Data Quality

Assessment Framework (DQAF) as defined by the IMF;

RECALLING FURTHER the Declaration on good practices in technical cooperation in statistical matters adopted by the United Nations Commission for Statistics during its session of March 1999;

REFERRING to the Paris Declaration on development aid effectiveness adopted in March 2005;

APPRECIATING the initiatives already undertaken by various concerned statistics organizations at national, regional and international levels for statistics development, particularly the strengthening of national legislations; adoption and implementation of National Strategies for Development of Statistics (NSDS) for the conduct of statistical activities; the development of harmonized statistical tools by the Regional Economic Communities (RECs); the adoption in 2007 of the Regional Strategic Reference Framework for Statistical Capacity Building in Africa (RRSF) by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the establishment of the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa) in 2007;

APPRECIATING ALSO the efforts undertaken to enhance the independence and status of statistics institutes and to secure appropriate stable financing for statistical activities according to the Third Edition of the United Nations Handbook of Statistics Organizations adopted in 2003;

RECALLING the resolutions of the African Symposium for Statistics Development held, respectively, in Cape Town in January 2006, and in Kigali in January 2007;

RECALLING the Decision adopted by the Executive Council of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2007 on elaboration of an African Charter on Statistics;

COMMITTED to promoting decision-making based on statistical information and to fostering statistical capacities on the continent;

RESOLVED to put in place a common legal framework for statistics development on the African continent.

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

PART I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

CHAPTER 1
DEFINITIONS

Article 1
Definitions

For the purposes of this Charter, the following definitions will be understood:

“Assembly”, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union;

“Charter”, the African Charter on Statistics;

“Commission”, the African Union Commission;

“Court”, the Court of Justice and Human Rights of the African Union;

“Member States”, Member States of the African Union;

“State Parties”, Member States, which have ratified this Charter;

“Statistics”, data required for production of organized statistical information, obtained from censuses and statistical surveys or administrative records;

“Statistical Information”, any organized quantitative and/or qualitative information obtained from statistical data that facilitate understanding of economic, political, demographic, social, environmental and cultural trends, and of gender and governance etc-related issues;

“Metadata”, the range of information, generally textual, that fosters understanding of the context in which statistical data have been collected, processed and analyzed with the objective of creating statistical information (legal and regulatory texts, methods and concepts used at all levels of information processing, definitions and nomenclatures, etc.);

“African Statistics”, all statistical information required to formulate monitor and evaluate development policies and programmes in Africa at national, regional and continental levels;

“Official Statistics”, the body of statistical information produced, validated, compiled and disseminated by Statistics Authorities;

“Statistics Authorities”, national statistics institutes and/or other statistics organizations in charge of official statistics production and dissemination at national, regional and continental levels;

“African Statistical System (ASS)”, the partnership composed of national statistical systems (data providers, producers and users, statistics research and training institutes and statistics coordination bodies, etc.), statistics units in the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), regional statistics organizations, regional training centres, statistics units of continental organizations and coordination bodies at continental level.

“Regional Organisations”, Regional Economic Communities, Regional Statistical Organisations and Regional Training Centres.

“African Statistician”, any statistics professional or researcher involved in the collection, production, analysis and dissemination of statistical data within the African Statistical System.

CHAPTER 2 OBJECTIVES

Article 2 Objectives

The objectives of this Charter are as follows:

1. To serve as policy framework for statistics development in Africa, especially the production, management and dissemination of statistical data and information at national, regional and continental levels;
2. To serve as advocacy tool and instrument for statistics development in the continent;
3. To ensure improved quality and comparability of the statistics required to monitor the economic and social integration process in the continent;
4. To promote adherence to fundamental principles of production, storage, management, dissemination and use of statistical information in the African continent;

5. To contribute to enhancing coordination of statistical activities and statistics institutions in Africa, including coordination of partners' interventions at national, regional and continental levels;
6. To build institutional capacity of Statistics authorities in Africa thus ensuring their autonomy in operations, while paying particular attention to adequacy of human, material and financial resources;
7. To serve as reference framework for the exercise of African statistician profession, professional code of ethics and best practices;
8. To promote a culture of evidence-based policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation; and
9. To contribute to improved and effective functioning of the African statistics system and experience sharing;
10. To ensure that there is no duplication in the implementation of statistics programmes.

CHAPTER 3 CHARTER PRINCIPLES

Article 3 Principles

The African Statistics System (ASS) organizations, African statisticians and all those operating in the field of statistics at the national, regional and continental levels shall respect the principles enshrined in the Resolution on the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted by the United Nations Commission for Statistics in April 1994. They shall also apply the best practices principles hereunder defined:

Principle 1: Professional independence

- **Scientific independence:** Statistics authorities must be able to carry out their activities according to the principle of scientific independence, particularly vis-à-vis the political authorities or any interest group; this means that the methods, concepts and nomenclatures used in statistical operation shall be selected only by the Statistics authorities without any interference whatsoever and in accordance with the rules of ethics and good practice.

- **Impartiality:** Statistics authorities shall produce, analyze, disseminate, and comment on African statistics in line with the principle of scientific independence, and in an objective, professional and transparent manner;
- **Responsibility:** Statistics authorities and African statisticians shall employ unambiguous and relevant methods in the collection, processing, analysis and presentation of statistical data. Statistical authorities shall also have the right and duty to make observations on erroneous interpretation and improper use of the statistical information that they disseminate.
- **Transparency:** To facilitate proper interpretation of data, Statistics authorities shall provide information on their sources, methods and procedures that have been used in line with scientific standards. The domestic law governing operation of the statistical systems must be made available to the public

Principle 2: Quality

- **Relevance:** African statistics shall meet the needs of users;
- **Sustainability:** African statistics shall be conserved in as detailed as possible a form to ensure their use by future generations, while preserving the principles of confidentiality and protection of respondents;
- **Data sources:** Data used for statistical purposes may be collected from diverse sources such as censuses, statistics surveys and/or administrative records. The statistics Organizations shall choose their sources in consideration of the quality of data offered by such sources and their topicality, particularly the costs incurred by the respondents and sponsors. The use by statistics authorities of administrative records for statistical purposes shall be guaranteed by domestic law, provided that confidentiality is preserved;
- **Accuracy and reliability:** African statistics shall be an accurate and reliable reflection of the reality;

- **Continuity:** Statistics authorities shall ensure continuity and comparability of statistical information over time;
- **Coherence and comparability:** African statistics shall be internally coherent over time and allow for comparison between regions and countries. To this end, these statistics shall make combined use of related data derived from different sources. It shall employ internationally recognized and accepted concepts, classifications, terminologies and methods;
- **Timeliness:** African statistics shall be disseminated in good time and, as far as possible, according to pre-determined calendar;
- **Topicality:** African statistics shall reflect current and topical events and trends;
- **Specificities:** Statistical data production and analytical methods shall take into account African peculiarities;
- **Awareness-building:** State Parties shall sensitize the public, particularly statistical data providers, on the importance of statistics.

Principle 3: Mandate for data collection and resources

- **Mandate:** Statistics authorities shall be endowed with a clear legal mandate empowering them to collect data for production of African statistics. At the request of statistics authorities, public administrations, business establishments, households and the general public may be compelled by domestic law to allow access to the data in their possession or provide data for the purpose of compilation of African statistics.
- **Resource Adequacy:** As far as possible, the resources available to Statistics authorities shall be adequate and stable to enable them to meet statistics needs at national, regional and continental levels. Governments of States Parties shall have the primary responsibility to provide such resources.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Statistics authorities shall use the resources so provided effectively and efficiently. This presupposes, in particular, that operations shall as far as possible, be programmed in an optimal manner. Every effort shall be made to achieve improved production and use of the statistics derived from

administrative records, to reduce the costs incurred by respondents and, as far as possible, avoid expensive direct statistical surveys.

Principle 4: Dissemination

- **Accessibility:** African statistics shall not be made inaccessible in any way whatsoever. This concomitant right of access for all users without restriction shall be guaranteed by domestic law. Micro-data may be made available to users on condition that the pertinent laws and procedures are respected and confidentiality is maintained.
- **Dialogue with users:** Mechanisms for consultation with all African statistics users without discrimination shall be put in place with a view to ensuring that the statistical information offered are commensurate with their needs.
- **Clarity and understanding:** Statistics shall be presented in a clear and comprehensible form. They shall be disseminated in a practical and appropriate manner, be available and accessible to all and accompanied by the requisite metadata and analytical commentaries.

- **Simultaneity:** African Statistics shall be disseminated in a manner that ensures that all users are able to use them simultaneously. Where certain authorities receive advance information under embargo, to allow them time to respond to possible questions, public announcement shall be made indicating the nature of such information, the identity of the recipients and the set timeframe before its public dissemination.
- **Correction:** Statistics authorities shall correct publications containing significant errors using standard statistical practices or, for very serious cases, suspend dissemination of such statistics. In that event, the users shall be informed in clear terms of the reasons for such corrections or suspension.

Principle 5: Protection of individual data, information sources and respondents

- **Confidentiality:** National Statistics authorities, African statisticians and all those operating in the field of statistics in Africa shall absolutely guarantee the protection of the private life and business secrets of data

providers (households, companies, public institutions and other respondents), the confidentiality of the information so provided and the use of such information for strictly statistical purposes. ,.

- **Giving assurances to Data providers:** Persons or entities interviewed during statistical surveys shall be informed of the objective of such interviews and of the measures put in place to protect the data provided.
- **Objective:** Data concerning individuals or entities collected for statistical purposes shall in no circumstance be used for judicial proceedings or punitive measures or for the purpose of taking administrative decisions against such individuals or entities.
- **Rationality:** Statistics authorities shall not embark upon statistical surveys except where pertinent information is unavailable from administrative records or the quality of such information is inadequate in relation to the quality requirements of statistical information.

Principle 6: Coordination and Cooperation

- **Coordination:** Coordination and collaboration amongst Statistics authorities in a given country are essential in ensuring unicity, quality and harmonious statistical information. Similarly, coordination and dialogue amongst all Members of the African Statistical System are vital for harmonization, production and use of African statistics.
- **Co-operation:** Bilateral and multilateral statistics cooperation shall be encouraged with a view to upgrading African statistics production systems.

CHAPTER 4 COMMITMENT OF STATES PARTIES

Article 4 Commitment of the States Parties

States Parties accept the objectives and principles enshrined in this Charter to reinforce their national statistical policies and systems and undertake to institute appropriate measures, especially legislative, regulatory and administrative to ensure that their laws and regulations are in conformity with this Charter.

CHAPTER 5
IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION
MECHANISMS, AND SCOPE OF THE CHARTER

Article 5
At National Level

States Parties shall ensure the implementation of this Charter in their respective countries.

Article 6
At Regional Level

States Parties shall ensure that the objectives and principles governing statistics at regional level are in conformity with this Charter. To this end, they shall monitor the activities of regional statistics organizations.

Article 7
At Continental Level

1. The Commission shall, in collaboration with all members of the African statistical system, institute an appropriate mechanism for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this Charter.

2. The Commission shall be the central coordination organ for implementation of this Charter in conformity with Article 8 hereunder, and shall carry out the following activities:
 - a) assisting States Parties in implementation of this Charter;
 - b) coordinating measures geared to evaluating implementation of this Charter;
 - c) undertaking robust advocacy for the development of statistics in Africa as a key infrastructure for Africa's renaissance;
 - d) ensuring that States Parties establish national funds for statistics development; and
 - e) contributing to the promotion of a culture of statistics in cooperation with the entire membership of African statistics system.

Article 8

Relation between the Members of African Statistics System

1. The African Statistics System is a partnership which functions as a network in conformity with the

subsidiarity principle. This principle consists in taking the measures needed for the systems to function to such levels as would enable it achieve maximum effectiveness. Each Member, in the area that concerns it, shall ensure proper coordination of the system.

2. The Implementation of this Charter should enable sub-regional, regional and continental organizations to fully play their role in Africa's development in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. It should also lead to provision of reliable statistical data for Africans and development partners, for better understanding of the situation in the continent.

Articles 9

Cooperation between the African Statistical System, Third Parties

1. The African Statistical System may conclude cooperation agreements with third parties;
2. In the implementation of this Charter, the African Statistical System shall enter into cooperative relations with the global statistics system, particularly the Specialized Institutions of the

United Nations and any other international organization.

3. Information on cooperation agreements concluded with Third Parties shall be communicated to the Policy Organs of the Union and Member States.

Article 10

Scope of Application

This Charter shall be applicable to all activities relating to statistics development, including its institutional environment, statistics production process and statistics products. It shall, in particular, apply to the following activities:

- statistical legislation;
- statistics advocacy actions;
- harmonization of statistical information gathering, production and dissemination methods;
- human and financial resource mobilization for statistics activities development and for effective operation of the African statistics system;

- establishing and updating definitions and concepts, norms and standards, nomenclatures and methodologies;
- coordination of statistical activities;
- data gathering, processing, management and archiving;
- dissemination and use of statistical information;
- statistical analysis and research; and
- statistics training and human resource development.

Article 11

Popularization of the Charter

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the widest possible dissemination of this Charter in accordance with the relevant provisions and procedures of their respective constitutions.

PART II:
FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 12
Safeguard Clause

No provision in the present Charter shall be interpreted as derogating from the principles and values contained in other relevant instruments for the promotion of statistics development in Africa.

Article 13
Interpretation

The Court shall be seized with matters of interpretation arising from the application or implementation of this Charter. Pending the establishment of the Court, such matters shall be submitted to the Assembly.

Article 14
Signature, Ratification and Accession

1. This Charter shall be open for signature, ratification and accession by all Member States, in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures.

2. The instruments of ratification or accession shall be deposited with the Chairperson of the Commission.

Article 15

Entry into Force

1. This Charter shall enter into force thirty (30) days after the deposit of the instruments of ratification by fifteen (15) Member States.
2. For each Member State that accedes to this Charter after its entry into force, the Charter shall become effective on the date the State deposits its instrument of accession with the Chairperson of the Commission.
3. The Chairperson of the Commission shall notify Member States of the entry into force of this Charter.

Article 16

Amendment and Revision

1. Any State Party may submit proposals for amendment or revision of this Charter;

2. Proposals for amendment or revision shall be submitted, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Commission who shall transmit copies thereof to the State Parties within thirty (30) days following the date of receipt of such proposals;
3. The Assembly shall, on the recommendation of the Executive Council, consider such proposals within one (1) year following the notification of State Parties, in keeping with the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Article.
4. Amendments or revision shall be adopted by the Assembly and then submitted for ratification by all Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures. Such amendments or revision shall become effective following the deposit of instruments of ratification by fifteen (15) States Parties.

Article 17

Depository

This Charter, drawn up in four (4) original texts in the Arabic, English, French and Portuguese languages, all four (4) texts being equally authentic, shall be deposited with the Chairperson of the Commission who shall transmit certified copies thereof to each

signatory State and notify them of the dates of the deposit of the instruments of ratification or accession. The Chairperson shall, upon its entry into force, register this Charter with the Secretary General of the United Nations.

**Adopted by the ... Ordinary Session of the Assembly
of Heads of State and Government of the African
Union held in,, this ... day of**