

Welcome Address
Workshop on Environment Statistics
Yaoundé, 5-9 December 2011

Director
Economic Commission for Africa/Sub-regional Office for Cameroon
(ECA/SRO-CA)

Dear Colleagues,

It is my privilege to welcome you all to Yaoundé, the Headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-regional Office for Cameroon to this important Workshop on Environment Statistics, organized by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). I would like to thank UNSD for their contribution to improving statistical capacity in Africa, particularly in the area of environment statistics, and for their collaboration with ECA in this area as well as in organizing this Workshop.

A groundbreaking consensus was achieved at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) (Rio de Janeiro, 1992). Countries agreed then, that strategies of sustainable development should integrate environmental issues, supported by environmental and socioeconomic data, into development plans and policies. Ten years later the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg, 2002) put the emphasis on reaching specific targets in specific time frames and monitoring progress, thus reaffirming the need for bridging the gap in mechanisms and instruments that measure and track progress, such as data, statistics, indicators and integrated information systems. The world is now getting prepared for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) which will take place in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.

In the Central African region, most of the Member States are faced with increasing environmental challenges including the loss of

biodiversity, desertification, the impacts of natural disasters, waste management and the impacts of climate change. To ensure sustainable development in the region, sound policy decisions must be made using timely and reliable information. A major difficulty in assessing the implementation of such decisions, however, has been the lack of basic environmental statistics and indicators.

The overall objective of this Workshop is, therefore, aimed at improving the quality of environment statistics in Africa. The Workshop will introduce a proposed set of environmental indicators that has been adopted by the ECOWAS region, for national and regional reporting and train participants on basic concepts, methods and best practices in environment statistics. I am pleased to learn that there have been positive developments in the implementation of environment statistics, both at the ECOWAS Commission as well as in some of the ECOWAS Member States. It is my hope that our region comprising the Central African countries will be able to benefit from these experiences and will also be able to make significant developments in this new and emerging field of statistics.

- The agenda for this Workshop will cover the followings themes:
- The need for environmental statistics and indicators;
 - Concepts and methods of environmental statistics and indicators;
 - Statistics on freshwater, coastal and marine resources, environmental health and natural disasters;
 - Statistics on land use and agriculture, forests and biodiversity;
 - Statistics on air, energy and waste; and
 - Institutional aspects of environmental statistics.

In addition, there will be a session dedicated to the development of a regional programme on environment statistics during which we will draw up a work plan for the implementation of environment statistics in our region. I believe that this is a very critical step towards establishing this important area of statistics both at the regional and national levels. It is also supportive of the overall goal of regional integration.

I particularly value the presence here today of participants from both the National Statistical Offices and the Ministries of Environment. This should go a long way in enhancing collaboration and coordination of stakeholders in national statistical systems. I also welcome all the other organizations present at this Workshop and believe that through the strengthening of inter-institutional partnerships in our countries, as well as through increased collaboration with such organizations, environment statistics will be improved and better coordinated within the national statistical systems. This will help to satisfy Africa's special needs in this area and assist it in addressing the global challenges which the region also faces.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you every success for your very important Workshop.