

**OPENING SPEECH BY GUEST OF HONOUR, HONOURABLE BATILDA
SALHA BURIAN (MP), MINISTER OF STATE, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 2007 AFRICAN STATISTICS
DAY AT KARIMJEE HALL
21 NOVEMBER 2007**

**Chairperson,
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Permanent Secretaries,
Distinguished Heads of Development Agencies,
Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, let me express my sincere appreciation for the honour I have been given to officiate the opening ceremony for the commemoration of the 2007 African Statistics Day.

Likewise, allow me Chairperson, to welcome all of you, to this important gathering and assure you that your contribution to the development of reliable statistical systems is paramount to the achievement of national development strategies, sustainable development and the MDGs. This should be the task of all us, the government, the private sector, NGOs and our development partners. As we all know the African Statistics Day is a yearly / advocacy tool aimed at raising awareness of the impotency of statistics in economic social development of Africa.

Chairperson,

In May 1990, the Twenty-fifth Session of the UN Economic Commission for Africa and Sixteenth Meeting of African Ministers responsible for Economic Planning and Development adopted Eighteenth November as African Statistics Day. The day has been marked to recognize “public awareness about the important role which statistics play in all aspects of social and economic life” of African countries. As you are all aware, the eighteenth day of November was on last Sunday and that is why the commemoration event is taking place today to enable most of us to participate.

Chairperson,

I have been informed that, the theme for this year’s celebration is: ***Improving Employment and Related Indicators to Better Inform Labour Policies and Programmes in Africa***. This theme is derived from the deliberations of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in 2006, which affirmed the centrality of employment and its primary role in poverty reduction and national development. Again, the Ministers Meeting in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in 2007 recognized the slow progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Always people say, not research, no right to speak. **Equally, one would say, no statistics, not accurate information and indicators on economic, social and political development.** During the Ministerial Meeting of Least Developed Countries for the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Brussels Programme of Action in

Cotonou, Benin on 8 June 2006, the ministers recognized that one of the major problems of the LDCs was lack of statistics. They pointed out that and I quote

“the limited availability of statistics on LDCs during the period 2001-2005 was problematic in providing accurate situation of development in LDCs.” End of quote.

At this juncture, it is therefore, crucial to raise awareness of data producers, users, suppliers and the population at large about the importance of having better statistics to monitor implementation of job creation policies and programmes in the country as well as the MDGs.

Chairperson,

I understand that data collection is not an easy task as many people may be tempted to believe. It needs some understanding on the part of data collectors as well as data providers, including some feedback mechanism from data users. Thus, I would like to appeal to all stakeholders to work together so that the data collected meet the desired need for evidence-based policy design and planning and to support implementation, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes and impacts of development initiatives.

The presence of all of us here signifies the importance of development of statistics in our countries. I therefore wish to emphasise that, it is through collaboration among all stakeholders that statistics development agenda will be achieved.

The continued co-operation and support by development partners in the development of our statistical system is highly appreciated. Without adequate

human, technical and financial support in this area, the provision of accurate, timely and reliable statistics would not be possible.

May I take this opportunity to assure you that, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is committed in supporting the National Statistical System and to ensure that, there is an increase capacity in providing accurate, timely and policy-relevant data on employment and related indicators.

Chairperson,

I am grateful by the efforts made by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in collaboration with various stakeholders to organize this important occasion to mark the 2007 African Statistics Day.

I am informed that activities to mark this Day will include, among other things, presentation of several papers related to the theme of this year, as well as display of products from different producers of statistics. It is my expectations that, these papers and materials will assist in generating ideas and activate live discussions among the participants.

Chairperson,

Let me also remind the planners and the public at large on the usefulness of statistics in planning and in our day to day activities. It is evident that one cannot contemplate any objective planning for socio-economic development without looking at the available information and particularly the statistical data to justify such plans.

On the other hand, there is a need to encourage young Tanzanians to recognize statistics as a rewarding profession. Therefore, qualified and competent statisticians and related professionals must be encouraged to join and manage the statistical systems.

One old friend of mine had a chat with me one day and he had this to tell me:

“if each expert has set foot on our soil could have resulted in some measure of positive social economic progress, Tanzania would have today being a medium income country, if not richer. A way must be found to make the role of experts more meaningful”

Chairperson,

I don't mean to under-rate the contribution of experts to our development efforts over the years. I only want to build a case for better use and targeting of expertise so that we can develop our countries wherever we are.

Chairperson,

I wish to thank all the collaborators in this event for their valuable contribution to the success of this special day. Let me once again take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers of this event for inviting me to officiate this commemorative occasion. It is my expectation that participants will find the occasion useful and contribute to the discussions to be followed.

Chairperson; Invited Guests; Distinguished Participants; Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these few remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare the 2007 African Statistics Day officially opened and wish you all a successful commemoration.

Thank you for your attention.