

WORKSHOP ON IMPROVING BASIC ECONOMIC STATISTICS IN SUPPORT
OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS
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OPENING STATEMENT

By

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Distinguished Participants,

Workshop Facilitators,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this workshop on “compilation of basic economic statistics”. I am particularly delighted to see senior staff from National Statistical Offices at this Workshop. This shows the importance that their respective governments attach to the improvement of basic economic statistics in support of the compilation of national accounts statistics and statistical development in general.

Various assessments of statistical development in Africa have highlighted the poor status of economic statistics and national accounts in many of our countries. These assessment have shown that the bulk of African countries

are still on the milestone phase 1 of the 1993 SNA implementation, namely the development of basic data sources, and the compilation of GDP by expenditure and by industry, as a result of poor quality of data sources and the inadequate level of human and financial resources to process these data sources into national accounts.

The status of basic economic statistics are characterized by the following: non compliance of economic censuses and surveys to the 1993 SNA concepts, non compliance to sound statistical techniques in sampling and processing, outdated business registers, inadequate frequency of data collection, low response rate, the informal and services sectors are not covered by surveys, and non compliance with the principles of official statistics in the use of administrative data. There are also institutional problems such as inadequate resources at National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and insufficient level of collaboration, especially between Central Bank, Ministry of Finance and NSOs.

Accordingly, the objectives of the present workshop are, as follows:

Firstly: To review current practices in the development of basic data sources and administrative records, to share best practices and to develop a clear strategy for updating business registers, to improve the quality of surveys and administrative records, to increase the compliance of survey methodology with the 1993 SNA concepts and to review the relevance and complementarities between administrative records and surveys.

Secondly: To address the institutional issues hindering the efficient use of administrative data and explore possibilities for developing memoranda of

understanding between NSOs and key statistical producers in the National Statistical System, namely the Central Banks, Ministries of Finance and line ministries.

And Finally: To integrate the results of basic economic statistics into the national accounts statistics compilation and to extend the results of surveys to the national economy.

We would like to thank the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) for their contribution to the organization of this series of workshops in terms of technical support as well as provision of financial support. I would also like to thank Statistics South Africa for hosting the first workshop on basic economic statistics in Pretoria. This collaboration in support of economic statistics is highly appreciated. Let me take this opportunity to mention that in support of national accounts, trade statistics and informal sector statistics, the African Centre for Statistics (ACS), in collaboration with UNSD, regional, sub-regional and other international organizations, will scale up its assistance to countries through various means, including preparation and/or adaptation of manuals, organization of expert group meetings, group training, workshops and pilot studies.

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Let me also inform you that Africa is becoming an emerging region in terms of statistical development. These should be exciting times for professional statisticians in Africa. The leading regional institutions have repositioned themselves to respond in a robust manner to the emerging

statistical reawakening. At the African Development Bank, the Statistics Division was upgraded to a Statistics Department last year; at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, an African Centre for Statistics was established last year; the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the other regional partners produced an African Charter on Statistics which will be presented to Heads of State and Government in 2008. This year, the Council of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Development endorsed the establishment of a Statistical Commission for Africa (Statcom-Africa) as the apex body for handling statistical development issues in Africa. Statcom-Africa will be reporting to the Council of Ministers and the United Nations Statistical Commission. The first meeting of Statcom-Africa will be held at the end of January 2008. And recently, an African Statistical Coordination Committee was established. The committee, which will be reporting both to managements of respective institutions and to Statcom-Africa comprises:

- The African Development Bank
- The African Union Commission
- The African Statistical Capacity Building Foundation
- The UN Economic Commission for Africa

I have no doubt that with these regional efforts, our partners will find Africa better organized and working in partnership, we can make significant progress in statistical development and by extension, national development outcomes in our countries and continent.

Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Having carefully reviewed the agenda and the program of work and being fully aware of your professional background, I am confident that you will achieve the above-mentioned objectives of the workshop. I also hope that the deliberations of this workshop will result into clear recommendations to improve the quality of basic economic statistics necessary for the compilation of national accounts.

Before I conclude my remarks, let me once more express the sincere gratitude of the African Centre for Statistics to the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) for their support in the organization of this and other planned workshops.

I wish you success in your deliberations.

Thanks you very much for listening to me.