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**Subject: National Statistical System Transformation
Process and Integrated Strategic Planning and its
Implementation Tools**

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Introduction

AFRISTAT was created in the context of an economic and financial crisis marked by the implementation of structural adjustment programmes backed by the international community that led to an increased demand for relevant statistics; a demand to which National Statistics Offices (NSO) were having a hard time responding. Specifically in the states of the Franc Zone, the devaluation of the CFA franc in early 1994 once more highlighted the inability of the National Statistical Systems (NSS) to respond to such demands. During the same period, the establishment of sub-regional integration bodies was equally plagued by the lack of harmonized and comparative data for the formulation of integration policies.

In this context, when AFRISTAT was established, it was given the mission of “contributing to the development of economic, social and environmental statistics in the Member states and strengthening their capacities in this area, collaborating with the national statistical bodies of the Member states and providing support in the collection, processing and dissemination of basic statistical information, and in macro-economic analysis and synthesis”.

Nearly two decades later, AFRISTAT has become a centre of excellence and reference in statistical capacity-building in Sub-Saharan Africa. Its actions, appreciated by the member states that have benefitted from many forms of technical support, have contributed to, on one hand, the development of the national statistical tool and, on the other hand, statistical standardization and comparability to facilitate sub-regional and regional integration. Its endeavours have also contributed to the development of information systems to monitor indicators and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

In the current context, marked by the countries’ commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the data revolution and the increasing interest in statistics expressed by a wide variety of institutions, AFRISTAT is facing new challenges, such as:

- ✚ The arrival of new players in the national, sub-regional and regional statistical spectrum;
- ✚ The growing number of initiatives and new themes, both within the countries (especially poverty reduction strategies) and in the international community (governance, peace and security, well-being, climate change and environment, etc.);
- ✚ The search for stable and innovative funding sources to provide long-term technical support; and
- ✚ Increasing demand on AFRISTAT from partners to implement their projects/programs for the benefit of member states.

What actions and measures has AFRISTAT taken that have led to successes in the member states, both at the institutional level and in the production of statistical data? What difficulties has it encountered, and what are the factors of progress in the NSS modernization process of its member states? How can the new challenges be overcome?

To answer these questions, the following paper focuses on three main points:

- ✚ Process for transforming national statistical systems
- ✚ Integrated strategic planning
- ✚ Strategy for mobilizing financial resources: experiences of a few member states (CRESS report, statistics development fund and Government-TFP consultation group)

1. Achievements of the national statistical systems transformation process

1.1. Background

The improvement of the organization and management of national statistical systems has become a key element to deal with the high demand for statistics following the development agenda, and to improve access to and the use of national and international resources for development in general, and statistics in particular.

To that end, several initiatives were established in the 2000s, both internationally and regionally. Without a doubt, the most important was the **Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Marrakech, Morocco** in 2004.

This initiative advocates for the implementation of appropriate organizational frameworks of activities and enhancing statistical coordination by creating synergy between the different stakeholders for more effective and better performing statistical systems.

1.2. Statistics legislation of AFRISTAT member states

AFRISTAT member states have statistics laws that, for the most part, were passed in the 2000s, with the exception of Cameroon (1991), Guinea (1995), Guinea Bissau (1991) and Chad (1999).

The statistics laws of member states generally establish a code of best practices governing the production of statistical information, define the area of government statistics and set out penalties for violating the established principles. Some states have established in their statistics law the funding sources of their national statistical system (NSS) or national statistics office (NSO). This is the case in Burundi, the Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Niger, Mali, Togo and Ivory Coast.

Pursuant to the recent African Charter on Statistics, some countries are considering implementation of a statistics development fund (Benin, Mali and Niger). These funds have a variety of funding sources, and their administration is clearly defined to guarantee transparency in the use of the resources mobilized.

Reforming statistics legislation has helped several countries to improve and strengthen statistical governance by adhering to best practices code of rules and implementing statistical coordination structures. Also of note is the change in status of national statistical services from a national office to a statutory body with corporate status and financial independence. This change was generally accompanied by improved living and working conditions of statisticians, especially those working in the central bodies of the NSS.

1.3. Statistical coordination

Statistics laws establish a general coordination framework—the National Statistics Council (NSC)—or any other framework in lieu thereof. Additional legislation establishes its make-up and operating policies. Most member states with statistics laws have adopted regulations to that effect.

NSCs are most often placed under the authority of a government figure, generally the minister in charge of statistics. However, in Senegal, the NSC is under the authority of the Prime Minister and in Burundi, the CNIS is under the guardianship of the Vice President of the Republic.

The NSOs act as secretary of the statistical coordination bodies. As such, they are responsible for coordination, preparing sessions and files to be submitted for NSC debate and implementing its actions. In Senegal, the minister responsible for statistics formally heads the secretariat of the National Statistics Council. He is supported in this duty by the director general of the National Agency of Statistics and Demography (ANSD) in his capacity as Chair of the Statistical Programs Technical Committee.

Technical coordination (statistics programs, nomenclature, methodologies, etc.) is also the responsibility of NSOs, in tandem with the technical committees created within the NSCs.

In recent years, several countries have organized “user-producer” meetings to enhance communication surrounding NSS products (Benin, Madagascar, Niger, etc.).

The lack of a data dissemination policy is a serious weakness in most countries. Nonetheless, several countries have made significant efforts to archive data (Senegal, Cameroon, Niger, Ivory Coast, which have sufficient available surveys—roughly 50 surveys on average).

1.4. Governance of statistical services

The heads of the NSOs of AFRISTAT member states have been meeting at least twice a year since the 1990s at the Observatory’s statutory meetings. These occasions are singular moments for exchanging experiences and mutually beneficial best practices. Moreover, newsmagazine La Lettre d’AFRISTAT (LLA), published four times a year, is a valuable forum for sharing these experiences in its “Best Practices Exchange” and “NSI News in Brief” sections.

Furthermore, participation in peer review missions and many countries’ acceptance to undergo an evaluation through this channel are actions that contribute to building the managerial capacities of NSOs.

Taking advantage of Statistics Canada’s International Statistical Fellowship Program (ISFP), on different occasions several NSO representatives from AFRISTAT member states have been educated on the keys to the success of this world-renowned statistical institution. The internal governance principles, in particular transparency and traceability of processes and the special attention paid to human resources, are among the most impressive. In an attempt to carry on with what was learned through this program, AFRISTAT is building its own capacities with the help of Statistics Canada so it may continue to disseminate these success factors in its member states. Building a national quality assurance framework, internal communication, crisis management, and integrated strategic planning are some of the themes being appropriated by AFRISTAT.

Finally, in order to mobilize resources, PARIS 21 is helping AFRISTAT to educate NSOs in member states on advocacy actions. Having started with the organization of funders' roundtables, with the encouragement of NSOs, they are currently continuing to move closer to their national Government-TFP consultation groups and to establish statistics development funds.

1.5. Difficulties and elements of progress in the process of modernizing AFRISTAT member states NSSs

Despite the progress made on the coordination front, there is still work to be done to mobilize resources to fund the production of statistics and to ensure that NSSs have adequate human resources.

Some elements of progress of note include:

- ✚ The progressive affirmation of a political will with regard to financial matters and human resources
- ✚ The mobilization of partners around NSDS objectives
- ✚ The use of new technologies to improve the data production and dissemination process in certain countries (Cameroon, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Djibouti and Senegal)

Furthermore, the capacities of member states are regularly strengthened through partnership development policy and AFRISTAT's scientific and technical monitoring.

AFRISTAT's collaboration with institutions such as Insee, Statistics Canada or PARIS21 has helped the Observatory to develop methodologies adapted to the specific features of its member states, while still complying with the latest international standards. In addition to making methodological guides available, AFRISTAT has encouraged direct contact between national experts and the experts of its Western partners. This aspect is illustrated in: (i) annual national accounts seminars, and (ii) the Insee Libourne training centre (CEFIL) workshop organized every year in partnership with Insee. These efforts have resulted in:

- ✚ The standardization of the statistical production of member states. Today, methodological changes are tracked almost in real time in AFRISTAT's competency areas. National accounts or situational activity indicators can be cited as examples in this area. All the countries are developing their national accounts using at least SNA93, while the countries that produce sector pricing and production indicators are in the process of revising their production devices to take the latest international methodological developments into account.
- ✚ The increase in technical autonomy in many areas, both in AFRISTAT and in member states. At AFRISTAT, the number of experts was significantly 'Africanized' compared when it was first established, without affecting the quality of services. In the countries, statistical production is more regular and is increasingly being produced entirely by local frameworks. The principle was proposed of using associate experts to bolster the technical competencies of notable national experts by giving them the opportunity to lend assistance to other countries.
- ✚ The extension of the field of statistical production; this is materialized in AFRISTAT gradually taking control of emerging themes. AFRISTAT would formalize the associated statistical production methods before disseminating them to member states for appropriation. Aspects of

this topic include: civil status statistics, quality assurance approach, employment statistics, GPS (Governance, Peace and Security), and big data.

- ✚ Improved visibility of NSO action: Thanks to AFRISTAT's initial or continuing action, member states have a website.

2. Integrated strategic planning

Within the framework of cooperation between AFRISTAT and Statistics Canada, Canada's experience in integrated strategic planning was shared with and appreciated by the directors general of the National Statistical Offices of AFRISTAT's member states, which also expressed their interest in its application. The approach for this application based on the existing situation, which is the strategic planning already underway at AFRISTAT and in its member states, is explained below.

2.1. International context requiring the introduction of strategic planning in AFRISTAT member states

The need for low income countries, and especially AFRISTAT member states, to have better strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation capacities became apparent in an international context marked by a pressing need to streamline financial resources allocated to development projects and programs within the framework of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Governments across the globe were under pressure from funders to do so. **Particular emphasis was placed on a new paradigm: results-based management.**

A series of high-level meetings and international events was organized to determine how to proceed in order to achieve **development results**. Of these meetings, the previously indicated Marrakech Roundtable in 2004 discussed planning and statistics issues. The Marrakech memorandum stated that: **"We accord the highest importance to supporting countries in strengthening their capacity to better manage for development results. [...] To steer the development process toward the goals they have defined, countries need stronger capacity for strategic planning, accountable management, statistics, monitoring, and evaluation ..."**

Along the same lines, the Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics (MAPS) recommended that all low income countries develop a national statistics development strategy (NSDS) by 2006. The Technical and Financial Partners committed to providing support to the countries to develop NSDSs.

It was in this international context that AFRISTAT member states undertook the development of NSDSs, and that AFRISTAT's medium-term plans were also marked by the "strategic planning and results-based management" approach.

On the cusp of the first AFRISTAT Strategic Plan of Activities (ASPA) 2006-2010, the NSSs of AFRISTAT member states were experiencing difficulties responding to increasingly stronger and more varied data requests to manage for results-based development. The situation resulted in an institutional organization that was poorly adapted to the situation, as well as insufficient or an even outright absence of statistical programming that established priorities. Added to these two factors were low and poor quality financial, material and human resources.

It was this situation that led AFRISTAT, in the 2006-2010 ASPA, to strengthen its assistance to member states in collaboration with its TFP in order to:

- ✚ Revise or establish draft legislation on the organization of statistics activities (management and coordination of statistical activity, definition of communication strategies and continued training development plans);
- ✚ Develop or update national strategy for development of statistics¹.

Five years later, to the benefit of implementation of the 2006-2010 ASPA, the overall NSS situation improved, even though support was not provided equitably to all countries. Actions to consolidate achievement continued during the implementation of the 2011-2015 ASPA. The progress achieved is explained below.

2.2. NSDS development training actions

Alone or in collaboration with other partners, AFRISTAT has provided its member states with assistance in the development, updating or availability of NSDS methodological and steering tools through training seminars/workshops.

During the 2006 workshop to launch NSDS development, funded by the African Development Bank, reflections on the start-up of operations to establish NSDSs were shared with participants. Communications covered the following subjects:

- ✚ International initiatives and AfDB approach to the development of NSDSs
- ✚ Institutional organization of NSSs and statistical coordination
- ✚ Human resources and national strategy for development of statistics
- ✚ Results-based management
- ✚ Strategic planning
- ✚ The place of economic statistics in a NSDS
- ✚ Integration of sectoral social statistics in a NSDS

A 2007 workshop focused on building the capacities of the heads of NSOs in techniques for producing reports on the results of implementation of the NSDS or any other statistical development program.

At another seminar/workshop in 2009, in which the NSO programming heads of AFRISTAT member states and the directors general of these institutions alternately participated, attention was focused on NSDS implementation steering, and monitoring and evaluation tools: possible solutions to the problems hindering NSDS implementation were put forward, and standardized models of steering, and monitoring and evaluation tools for NSDS implementation were selected; on one hand, this is a canvas for developing annual action plans and activity reports and reporting of TFP actions, and on the other hand,

¹ Final assessment report of the AFRISTAT 2006-2010 Strategic Work Programme. December 2011.

a logic framework and terms of reference specially designed for monitoring and evaluating development strategies.

Furthermore, strategic planning and results-based management training was also given to NSS managers of the following countries, at their request: Benin, Ivory Coast, Congo, Central Africa and Togo. It must also be noted that students at statistical training schools in Abidjan, Dakar and Yaoundé have been receiving this training since 2008.

2.3. Direct support for establishing and monitoring NSDS implementation

Direct support was provided to at least two thirds of AFRISTAT member states in the process for establishing and monitoring NSDS implementation: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Comoro Islands, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal and Togo.

For some, very specific activities were carried out that bear mentioning.

AFRISTAT began supporting Benin's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis (INSAE) in 2012 by helping to implement a results-based system for the development of annual activity plans and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. This support was in response to the INSAE Board of Directors' recommendation to be able to measure the results of its planned activities. In the same streak, a new INSAE managers rating system was developed. The more objective system placed much more emphasis on the outcomes of activities than on the behaviour of its officers.

In Togo, with financial assistance from the European Union, AFRISTAT conducted studies in 2013 in view of transforming the Statistics and National Accounts Branch (DGSCN) into a National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies (INSEED). Several documents were produced, including the 2015-2017 action plan, the 2015-2017 budget, an organizational chart determining the human resources required for the INSEED to function properly, etc.

It should be noted that to equip the national statistical systems of its member states with monitoring and evaluation tools, AFRISTAT published a methodological document this year entitled: "Guide pour le suivi et évaluation axés sur les résultats des stratégies nationales de développement de la statistique" [Guide on results-based monitoring and evaluation of national strategies for development of statistics]. Relying on this guide, and within the framework of a consortium with the consulting firm AGRER, AFRISTAT supported the NSO of Ivory Coast in its implementation of the 2012-2015 NSDS implementation mechanism in September 2015.

2.4. Changes brought about by the actions taken

The changes caused by these actions can be seen in the improved business administration of the NSOs, in statistical production, coordination support in the NSSs as well as the efforts that most NSOs are making by producing work programs and activity reports that contribute to the mobilization of financial resources and strengthening statistical coordination.

According to the most recent data², almost all AFRISTAT member states:

- ✚ have at least one NSDS or a Statistics Master Plan (SDS) that plays the same role as an NSDS;
- ✚ develop annual work programs deriving from the NSDS/SDS; and
- ✚ prepare annual activity reports on the implementation of annual work programs.

It should be noted that in some countries (Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Mali, Niger, Senegal, etc.), programs and annual activity reports are developed both for the NSO and for the NSS. Furthermore, with the help of the NSDS, these documents are regularly produced and improved.

In the area of institutional capacity-building and coordination of national statistical systems, the Bamako Declaration on the coordination of aid in French-speaking Africa in the field of statistics was adopted in October 2008 as the instrument of coordination and mobilization of resources to implement the regional strategic framework of statistical development in Africa and its national strategy for the development of statistics.

2.5. Improvement of the strategic planning process using the integrated approach

In September 2014, alongside the 30th meeting of the AFRISTAT Steering Committee, a workshop on integrated strategic planning was organized for NSO directors general of AFRISTAT member states. The objectives of the workshop, organized in conjunction with Statistics Canada, were to:

- ✚ Report on:
 - AFRISTAT's efforts to promote the culture of strategic planning and results-based management within its own organization and among its member states;
 - The status of AFRISTAT and its member states in terms of the use of strategic planning and results-based management;
- ✚ Share Statistics Canada's experience in integrated strategic planning with NSO directors general.

The workshop demonstrated the renewed interest of NSO directors general in strategic planning in general, and in integrated strategic planning in particular. Some directors expressed the need for training of their statistical activity programming partners in this area. Given the expressed needs, the option of organizing sub-regional integrated strategic planning workshops was mutually approved by AFRISTAT and Statistics Canada.

These institutions mobilized to organize two workshops:

- ✚ The first in Abidjan (Ivory Coast), in June 2015 for the managers of West African national statistical systems; and
- ✚ The second in Yaoundé in October 2015 for the managers of Central African national statistical systems.

² Data from a small survey conducted for the writing of this report.

Nearly 80 NSO managers from AFRISTAT's member states participated in these workshops. Facilitated by AFRISTAT, PARIS21 and Statistics Canada experts, the general goal of the workshops was to strengthen the practice of strategic planning in the NSSs of African countries by incorporating the "human resource management" and "cost accounting" aspects.

The training helped participants to:

- ✚ Acquire: (i) a minimal methodological basis in integrated strategic planning, necessary for the proper development and monitoring and evaluation of national strategy for development of statistics and statistical activity programs in NSOs; (ii) a better understanding of the basic concepts, principles and tools of strategic planning in general and integrated strategic planning specifically and, on the other hand, improved knowledge of the various steps in the strategic planning process (identifying issues, establishing objectives, results, strategies and activities) and the associated key principles;
- ✚ Have a better understanding of the specific features of integrated strategic planning (ISP); and
- ✚ Information on the new PARIS21 guidelines for establishing NSDSs as well as the various NSDS monitoring and assessment tools.

Furthermore, the teachings of the workshop related to Statistics Canada's experience in integrated strategic planning show that our countries could find answers to the following recurring questions:

- ✚ How can financial management be improved to better support the planning and implementation of activities?
- ✚ How can planning governance be improved to mobilize human resources?
- ✚ What tools can be used to meticulously implement strategies (more robust project management, employee performance management, financial resource management framework)?

Applying strategic planning could be one approach to finding solutions. From this perspective, pilot countries will express an interest in testing it. This type of exercise would of course take into consideration the specifics of these countries with regard to the great progress made by Canada in the use of this tool. In other words, conditions will first have to be met, especially as concerns the availability of an adequate information system.

3. Strategy for mobilizing financial resources: examples from a few member states (CRESS report, statistics development fund and Government-TFP group)

In terms of a financial resource mobilization strategy to fund statistics, AFRISTAT member states have made efforts to improve funding for the action programs of their NSDSs. These include:

- ✚ The availability and assistance of development partners to support statistical activities;
- ✚ Increased resources from national budgets for statistics, even if the level of mobilization is still insufficient.

This situation exposes the development of statistics to the risk associated with the uncertainties of external funding.

To improve visibility of statistical funding, some countries have assessed the volume and areas of intervention of funding that the NSS has received. This has allowed them to identify the difficulties encountered by actors in the funding of statistics activities.

Hence, with the support of PARIS21, Benin and Cameroon have conducted the Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS) exercise. Furthermore, Burundi, the Union of the Comoros, Djibouti and Madagascar assessed their NSDSs with the support of partners (AFRISTAT, ADB, AEC and PARIS21).

This assessment helped make NSS actors (statistics producers and users, TFPs) aware of the necessity to improve statistical funding and to reflect on the future CRESS exercises.

Also note that some countries (Benin, Mali, Niger and Chad) have started to look at implementing a national statistics development fund pursuant to the recommendations of the African Charter on Statistics.

Mali has a TFP consultation framework in the field of statistics. Mali's TFP statistics group participates in annual reviews (technical and political) of the Statistics Master Plan.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, it can unequivocally be claimed that with AFRISTAT, commendable progress has been achieved in the process of transforming the national statistical systems of its member states, both in the production of statistics and at the institutional and organizational level, especially in the development and enacting of statistics laws, and the reform and programming of statistical activities with the implementation and monitoring of the assessment of NSDSs.

The changes that the national statistical systems of AFRISTAT member states have undergone in the last 15 years, in a context marked by strategic planning and results-based management, have led to commendable progress in statistical infrastructure. However, many efforts still need to be made to meet the statistical information targets in the 2030 United Nations agenda and the 2063 Africa Union agenda.

Continuing these efforts in the current situation will allow AFRISTAT member states to add their contributions to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals by producing performance measurement indicators. To achieve this, it would be desirable for funding partners, NSOs and other statistics producers to periodically agree to meet the priority needs regarding quality and quantity.

AFRISTAT has already integrated into its 2016 action plan and its 2017–2021 Strategic Work Programme the major statistical challenges regarding employment, gender, GPS (governance, peace and security), implementation of the 2008 SNA, price statistics, etc. AFRISTAT is renewing its availability to offer permanent support in this regard to its member states and to all African countries, in collaboration with all the partners concerned with statistical development in Africa.