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## The Africa Data Consensus

**Eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union  
Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary  
Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the  
Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African  
Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development**  
Addis Ababa, 30 and 31 March 2015

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side event of the 8<sup>th</sup> AU-ECA Joint Conference of Ministers**

### Definitions

- ✓ **Data Community:** A data community refers to a group of people who share a social, economic or professional interest across the entire data value chain – spanning production, management, dissemination, archiving and use.
- ✓ **African Data Revolution:** A profound shift in the way that data is harnessed to impact on development decision-making, with a particular emphasis on building a culture of usage. The process of embracing a wide range of data communities and diverse range of data sources, tools, and innovative technologies, to provide disaggregated data for decision-making, service delivery and citizen engagement; and information for Africa to own its narrative.
- ✓ **Data Ecosystem:** Multiple data communities, all types of data (old and new), institutions, laws and policy frameworks, and innovative technologies and tools, interacting to achieve the data revolution.

### Why an African data revolution?

At their 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2014, African Heads of State requested ECA, AUC, AfDB and UNDP to organize a High Level Conference to discuss the data revolution in Africa and its implications for African Union's Agenda 2063 and the post-2015 development agenda. The High Level Conference on Data Revolution was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 27 to 29 March 2015, culminating in this Africa Data Consensus.



A sustained data revolution is needed to drive social, economic and structural transformation in every African country. Such a revolution will also make it easier to track our countries' progress towards meeting national and globally agreed sustainable development goals, with a view to leave no one behind.

The building blocks for an African data revolution are already in place. National Statistical Offices have long been the backbone of data production and management, producing official statistics and supporting data activities to create accurate and timely data for decision-making.

However, today's development challenges and prospects call for a broad data ecosystem that spans the entire value chain driven by national priorities and underpinned by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. This ecosystem must be inclusive of all forms of data – including official and other data – and involve all stakeholders.

## Vision

A partnership of all data communities that upholds the principles of official statistics as well as openness across the data value chain, which creates a vibrant data ecosystem providing timely, user-driven and disaggregated data for public good and inclusive development

## Challenges

Building this new African data ecosystem will involve addressing a number of challenges, including:

- Uneven coverage, lack of disaggregated data and data stored in sector-specific silos.
- Supply driven data subject to conditional financing and influences at odds with national priorities
- Lack of accessible usable information that is open to all communities
- A mismatch between available data and actual problems
- A lack of harmonisation of data collected by different sources in different formats
- Weak demand and capacity in the use of data at both national and local level
- A lack of timely, accurate, comparable and relevant data.
- Weak data governance and accountability
- Concerns over privacy, data protection and intellectual property
- Insufficient funding and dependence on external resources
- Lack of common standards allowing comparison of data across sectors and countries
- The lack of data on key issues such as governance, peace and security. environmental sustainability, gender and human rights



## Principles

- Political will is pivotal to the implementation of the African data revolution. Countries must own the prioritisation, financing and leadership of this revolution.
- Data must be disaggregated to the lowest levels of administration by gender, age, income, disability, and other categories.
- People must be counted to make them count. Civil registration should be accessible and provided at no cost.
- Official data belong to the people and should be open to all. They should be open by default.
- The data community should embrace the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as a starting point.
- There is a need for governance and coordination of the data ecosystem.
- African governments should acknowledge open data provided by credentialed data communities as acceptable sources of country statistical information.
- Technology, new forms of data and other innovations should be actively embraced.
- Data communities should promote a demand-driven data user culture spanning the entire ecosystem.
- Privacy and intellectual property rights should be respected.
- Data should be translated into information that is simple, understandable and relevant.
- Information must be timely, accurate, relevant and accessible.
- Data must be driven by needs rather than for its own sake.
- The data revolution in all its facets should be gender-sensitive.

## Key Actions

- Create an inclusive data ecosystem involving government, private sector, academia, civil society, local communities and development partners that tackles the informational aspects of development decision-making in a coordinated way. Governments must play a pro-active role in engaging this community and other stakeholders should prioritise partnership with government.
- As a critical first step to strengthening the data ecosystem, review the capacity needs, legal and financial frameworks, participating institutions, data assets and gaps at national, sub-national and community level to recognize the roles of the various stakeholders and create a workable roadmap with clear milestones.
- Governments should take the lead in ensuring that the recurrent costs of production and dissemination of all required data is financed from sustainable domestic resources.
- Existing National Strategies for the Development of Statistics should be revised to become more inclusive of all data communities.



- Governments should identify a body authorised to provide credentials to data communities providing open data, based on established criteria for quality, reliability, timeliness and relevance to statistical information needs.
- The development of Civil Registration systems that produce credible vital statistics must be a cornerstone of the data revolution. Likewise population, economic, labour, health, education, land and agricultural management information systems should be supported to ensure timely and accurate data to drive decision-making at national and sub-national level.
- Public-private partnerships should be adopted, fostered and strengthened as a strategy for knowledge transfer and to promote sustainable collaborations
- All international norms and standards relating to official statistics should, where applicable, be extended to all data so as to improve their validity and credibility.
- Innovative, integrated methodologies and technologies, including geospatial referencing, should be promoted to improve data collection, analysis and usage.
- Integrate gender statistics and gender specific indicators in monitoring and evaluation.
- The Pan Africanist Institutions (AfDB, AUC and ECA) should take the lead in the realisation of the Data Consensus, in partnership with other development partners.



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## Ministerial statement on Data Revolution and Statistics

We, African ministers of finance, planning, economic development and integration, meeting in Addis Ababa on 30 and 31 March 2015 for the eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development,

...

Therefore declare:

...

6. High-quality statistical information and data are essential for the proper planning and measurement of development outcomes. Africa should generate its own data to enable it to better monitor and track economic and social targets, including the goals and objectives of Agenda 2063. A data revolution in Africa would afford our continent the opportunity to interact with diverse data communities and to embrace a wide range of data sources, tools and innovative technologies, which would enable the continent to produce disaggregated data, including gender-disaggregated data, for decision-making, service delivery and citizen engagement. An African data revolution should be built on the principles of openness across the data value chain and a vibrant data ecosystem driven by national priorities and inclusive national statistical systems. In this regard, we underscore the importance of strengthening existing pan-African statistical institutions, as well as other similar institutions agreed to by Heads of State and Government, to support the implementation of the first ten-year plan of Agenda 2063.





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## Committee of Experts Resolution on Data Revolution and Statistical Development

### Resolution L4 – Data revolution and statistical development

*The Conference of Ministers,*

*Recognizing* that the implementation of Agenda 2063 will require comprehensive, accurate and timely data,

*Building on* its resolution 923 (XLVII) on the post-2015 development agenda,

*Reiterating* the importance of statistics information for fostering Africa's economic and political integration and for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes, policies and initiatives, such as Agenda 2063, the extraordinary summit on employment, poverty eradication and inclusive development, and the post-2015 development agenda,

*Recalling* that at its twenty-third ordinary session, held in Malabo, on 26 and 27 June 2014, the Assembly of the African Union asked the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Development Programme to organize a high-level conference on the data revolution,

*Taking into account* the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which called for a data revolution to make information and data more available, more accessible and more broadly disaggregated,

*Noting with satisfaction* the entry into force in April 2014 of the African Charter on Statistics,

*Noting* the progress made by the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank in developing and implementing continental frameworks, strategies and initiatives such as the 2010 round of population and housing censuses, the Yamoussoukro Declaration on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, the African programme on



governance, peace and security statistics, and the 2011 round of the International Comparison Programme,

*Recognizing* that there is a lack of reliable data on key indicators of labour markets, migration and informal economy that can be used to monitor and evaluate progress made on commitments such as the Ouagadougou Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa,

*Noting* that several African countries are graduating to middle income status,

1. *Endorses* the report of the High-level Conference on the Data Revolution, adopts its recommendations and calls upon member States, the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and other development partners to implement it;

2. *Resolves* to lead the African data revolution, bringing together diverse data communities and using a wide range of data sources, tools and innovative technologies, with a view to providing timely and disaggregated data for decision-making, service delivery, citizen engagement and information to drive Africa's social, economic and structural transformation;

3. *Undertakes* to ensure that the African data revolution is built on the principle of openness across the data value chain and on vibrant data ecosystems driven by national priorities and anchored in national statistics systems that are inclusive of all data communities and stakeholders;

4. *Commits itself* to providing adequate funds for the data revolution and data communities to ensure their sustainability;

5. *Commends* member States that have signed and ratified the African Charter on Statistics and calls upon those that have not done so to sign and ratify it as soon as possible;

6. *Requests* the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the relevant agencies of the United Nations to create a working group for the development of indicators for the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 (2014–2023);

7. *Calls upon* member States to participate actively in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses;

8. *Requests* member States to implement the African programme on governance, peace and security statistics and the African Union Commission to ensure that the programme is integrated into the Africa Peer Review Mechanism;





9. *Requests* the African Union Commission and the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisia to accelerate the establishment of the African Institute for Statistics, to be based in Tunis, and the Pan-African Statistical Training Centre, to be based in Yamoussoukro, to ensure better coordination and harmonization of statistics in Africa;

10. *Calls upon* development partners to strengthen the capacity of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa working group on the labour market and the informal economy, in order to produce better statistics and implement the framework for work statistics put forward at the nineteenth session of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians, held in 2013;

11. *Calls upon* member States to conduct labour force surveys on a regular basis in order to obtain data on the status of employment in their countries, and requests the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, the International Labour Organization and the International Organization for Migration, with the support of development partners such as the African Development Bank, the European Union and the World Bank, to strengthen the production of migration statistics in Africa with a view to improving the monitoring of the Joint Labour Migration Programme;

12. *Calls upon* the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank to fast-track the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Declaration on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics;

13. *Requests* the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank to develop an index measuring the emerging-economy status of African countries, in line, among other things, with the guidance in Agenda 2063 and the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda.



## Road Map

Subsequent to the Ministerial endorsement, the members of the ADC drafting group and other experts convened at the Tony Elumelu Foundation's Africapitalism Institute in Lagos, Nigeria, from 11-13 May, where they defined a road map for introducing the Africa Data Consensus, focusing on actions that would help advance and complement national initiatives around the data revolution. The meeting established six pillars to frame the plan of action.

## Securing Political Commitment

This pillar spells out advocacy-related actions the ADC continental initiative will initiate to secure political commitments at the highest possible level, from different actors. The objective is to develop targeted engagement campaigns, capitalising on key upcoming opportunities that will deliver strong and actionable statements of support for Data Revolution from African leaders and senior policy makers, leaders of continental institutions, international actors as well as leaders of civil society and the private sector.

## Building the Evidence Base

The ADC continental Initiative intends to play a critical role in providing the body of knowledge needed to establish the state of readiness of African countries to operationalize data revolution. Without baseline data it will be difficult to establish priorities for building the ecosystem, or to target areas for investment. As such, this pillar identifies specific reviews, mapping exercises and inventory processes to be undertaken at national level, with support from the ADC continental initiative. Activities under this pillar will build on PARIS21's Metabase.

## Embedding the Data Revolution in African Countries

This pillar outlines actions that should be taken in African countries to move the ADC forward. Actions included in this pillar relate to key structures and processes of dialogue and consensus building needed to provide the foundation for building national and sub-national data ecosystems that will support sustainable development, with the active participation of all stakeholders and data communities.

## Financing and Sustainability

The objective of this pillar is to put in place the foundations for the realisation of the ADC's proposed key action that "Governments should take the lead in ensuring that the recurrent costs of production and dissemination of all required data is financed from sustainable domestic resources".

## Building Capacities & Skills

This pillar's objective is to support the strengthening of country stakeholders' capacities and skills in generating and using data and technologies needed to realise the data revolution. It sets out to identify capacity needs for each stakeholder in the data ecosystem, as well as the potential of each to build capacity for other stakeholders; and, identify and link key capacity building actions and appropriate technologies, with potential providers at national, regional and international levels.



## Building Partnerships & Synergies

This pillar identifies actions to be taken to build and strengthen partnerships with other existing data revolution-related initiatives and processes – at national, continental and global levels. These include processes underway in relation to the Post-2015 agenda, data and statistics. The objective is to maximise synergies between initiatives and commitment processes that share the principles spelled out in the ADC, as well as to attract the required support for the implementation of the continental initiative.