**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General
1 December 2017

Original: English

**Statistical Commission**
**Forty-ninth session**
6–9 March 2018
Item 3 (f) of the provisional agenda*
**Items for discussion and decision: regional
statistical development**

## Report of the Economic Commission for Africa on regional statistical development in Africa

### Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Economic Commission for Africa on regional statistical development in Africa. The report highlights activities being undertaken in Africa on statistical development, some of which have a global connotation. The report includes methodological works in support of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. It includes key areas of focus, such as: the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa; civil registration and vital statistics; agricultural statistics; gender statistics; and open data and the data revolution. The Statistical Commission is invited to comment on the work undertaken in the Africa region as well to identify possible areas of collaboration with other regions.

---

* E/CN.3/2018/1.

Please recycle ♻

# Report of the Economic Commission for Africa on regional statistical development in Africa

## I. Introduction

1.      The need for high-quality real time data in the design, monitoring and effective evaluation of national, subregional, continental and global development agendas remains a challenge to national statistical systems in Africa. The good news is that new technologies have exponentially increased the volume and the type of data available, creating unprecedented possibilities for informing and transforming societies. Africa should take advantage of innovative and adaptive approaches to better harness the potentials of the new world of data.

2.      The present report covers activities being undertaken in Africa on statistical development in term of strategies, methodologies and key areas of focus, while indicating related challenges faced by the African statistical system as well as some key initiatives in support of statistical development in Africa.

3.      In concluding, the report proposes key potential actions to be taken by the Statistical Commission in order to scale up international commitment and support for statistical development in African countries in the global context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in the continental context of the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

## II. Strategies

### A. Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa

4.      The pan-African institutions, the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Capacity-Building Foundation, are leading a joint effort to revise and update the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa. The main objective of strategy is to harmonize statistics produced in Africa in order to inform the regional integration agenda, as well as Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the "high fives", the pillars of the transformative agenda for Africa. It also aims to operationalize the vision of the African statistical system, which is: "to become an efficient statistical system that generates reliable, harmonized and timely statistical information covering all dimensions of political, economic, social, environmental and cultural development and integration of Africa". This vision will be achieved through the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, which covers the period from 2017 to 2026. It is anchored on four strategic pillars and is based on the establishment of a strong and operational statistical system for the emergence of an African statistical renaissance. The four pillars are: (a) to produce quality statistics for Africa; (b) to coordinate the production of quality statistics for Africa; (c) to build sustainable institutional capacity in the African statistical system; and (d) to promote a culture of quality decision-making.

5.      The Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa and its supporting documents (action plan, financing plan and resource mobilization and financing strategies) have been developed through an extensive consultative process involving all African countries, regional economic communities and development partners. The strategy was approved by the Committee of Directors-General of National Statistics

Offices at its meeting in Dakar in March 2017 and was adopted at the meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration held in Addis Ababa in October 2017. The strategy will be submitted to the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government in January 2018 for final consideration and adoption.

## B.  National strategies for the development of statistics

6.     National Governments and the international development community have increasingly recognized the essential role that statistics play in development policy and, as a consequence, the need for strategic planning in the development of national statistical systems, particularly in developing countries.

7.     The pan-African institutions (the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission, the African Capacity-Building Foundation and ECA) are in the process of promoting the design of national strategies for the development of statistics in Africa. The actions undertaken by pan-African institutions have yielded several significant results, including: (a) the development of a guidebook on mainstreaming sectors into the national strategies, which has been internationally accepted as best practice in the design of such strategies; (b) the organization of regional and continental workshops to build capacity for the development of national strategies and related processes in African countries; and (c) the provision of technical assistance and funding to African countries for the design of their national strategies. In the last few years, assistance has been provided to more than 22 countries[1] to evaluate, design or update their national strategies for the development of statistics or their statistics strategies. Together with other partners, in particular with the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century, pan-African institutions have led inter-agency missions to countries to review implementation of their national strategies. In the light of the increased demand for the development of data resulting from the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the new Results Measurement Framework designed by the African Development Bank Group, all African countries and regional economic communities, with the technical and financial support of the pan-African institutions, are aligning their national and regional strategies for the development of statistics with the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.

## C.  Development of national spatial data infrastructure

8.     As part of its efforts to assist member States to achieve increased levels of socioeconomic development, ECA, together with its partners and other regional initiatives, has been carrying out a number of synergistic actions to promote the development of national spatial data infrastructures along with others national strategies of member States. Those efforts have led to the development, at the regional level, of the African Regional Spatial Data Infrastructure, a cooperative geoinformational management tool for Africa, which aims to leverage the benefits of geospatial science and technology for people-centred, free-market based and export-oriented socioeconomic development.

––––––––––––––––––

[1] Including Benin, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, the Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

9.      In line with the current recalibration of the ECA business focus, the geoinformational vision is concurrently focused on: (a) advancing holistic geospatial information management and governance; (b) establishing an authoritative repository of development data ("open government" data); (c) auto-empowering African communities in order to increase spatial literacy, spatial awareness and navigational abilities; and (d) mainstreaming the enabling capabilities of geospatial technology into the activities of national statistics offices.

## D.  Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

10.      In the framework of the action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Africa, and following the priority technical assistance needs identification assessment[2] undertaken in November 2014 by the African Development Bank Group, technical assistance activities have been conducted and are currently ongoing to improve the quality and availability of agricultural data to users. The priority needs identification assessment indicated that, in terms of technical assistance, countries in Africa are in greatest need of the development of Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The development of such plans, which rests on the guidelines prepared by the Global Office of the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics and field-tested by the Global Office and the African Development Bank in Burundi, is carried out through a participatory and inclusive process comprising the following four steps: preparation; launching; assessment; and planning. To ensure full ownership of the development process for the strategic plans and its by-products, experts in national agricultural subsectors work together with stakeholders, and national workshops are conducted on the development of the strategic plans, taking in each of these steps in a fully participatory manner.

11.      At the request of member States, the African Development Bank provided 24 countries with the necessary technical assistance for the development of their Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Plans are under way to involve regional economic communities in the development of the plans, with a view to ensuring that they own the process, build their capacity and help coordinate the process in their respective member countries.

## III.  Methodological works to support the African statistical agenda

### A.  Methodological work in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

**Integrated Regional Indicator Framework Development for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063**

12.      Within Africa, there have been ongoing activities to develop an integrated monitoring and reporting framework for both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. After different consultations and meetings, a final agreement was reached to use

_____

[2] African Development Bank Group, "Identifying Technical Assistance Needs in Agricultural Statistics in African Countries", February 2015.

140 indicators (of which most are Sustainable Development Goals indicators) for the regional monitoring and reporting on both agendas.

**Handbook on the Integrated Regional Indicator Framework**

13.    The African Centre for Statistics has prepared a Handbook on the Integrated Regional Indicator Framework of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063: Concepts and Definitions. An expert group meeting was organized to review the Handbook from 18 to 20 September 2017 in Nairobi. The final version of the Handbook is in the process of being finalized through the incorporation of the comments of the participants at the expert group meeting.

**Survey on the availability of economic indicators on the Sustainable Development Goals**

14.    At the national level, measuring the progress towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for a concerted effort by the national statistical system, coordinated by the national statistical office, to determine how to best carry out the related data collection, processing, compilation, analysis and dissemination activities to meet the needs and requirements of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Goals.

15.    In support of the efforts of its member States, ECA conducted a survey on the availability of the tier I Sustainable Development Goal economic indicators and related data sources. The survey revealed that there are significant gaps and discrepancies in the availability of indicators and their respective data sources among the 54 African countries.

16.    An expert group meeting was convened inviting representatives of member States to Addis Ababa in November 2017 to meet with representatives from the agencies responsible for reporting on the indicators of the respective Sustainable Development Goals. Country experts presented papers on the practice, experiences and challenges in terms of data collection and processing. Experts from the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the International Labour Organization and the International Economic Association introduced methodologies on how to calculate and produce data related to the indicators of the respective Goals. A report on economic indicators related to the Goals in Africa was compiled to summarize the key findings, conclusions and recommendations that emerged from the meeting. The final report was distributed to all countries on the continent.

## B.    Statistical development indicators

17.    In response to the statistical challenges posed to African countries by the increased demand for high quality statistics, stakeholders have taken several initiatives, including a composite index, the African Statistical Development Index, which was initially developed in 2012 by ECA to measure progress in statistical development in Africa. In connection with targets 18 and 19 of Sustainable Development Goal 17, ECA has revisited and improved the methodology of the Index, as endorsed at the fifth session of the Committee on Statistics in Africa in December 2016, held in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire. The improved version of the Index was presented at an event organized by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century in April 2017, at which participants observed that the methodology of the new version was global in scope since it was based on quality and

strategic frameworks qualifying it for use in other regions and by agencies outside Africa. As a result of this uniquely desirable feature, ECA decided to rename the Development Index: from now on, it will be known as the Statistical Development Indicators (with the acronym StatDI) to allow for its wider applicability.

18.    This tool is composed of a sequence of composite indices. Each index measures the statistical development performance prevailing in a dimension or sub-dimension of a national statistical system. By tracking the progress in the different dimensions, the tool can be used to measure the strengths and weaknesses of a given national statistical system. For its operationalization, and to enhance ownership of the tool by member States, ECA is developing a manual and software package, to be reviewed by an expert group meeting. The manual and software, once reviewed, will be presented to the Committee of Directors-General of National Statistics Offices.

## C.  Agricultural Statistics Capacity Indicators

19.    One of the constraints faced in formulating the action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Africa was a lack of comprehensive and up-to-date information on the requisite quality of national capacity to produce agricultural statistics. Accordingly, the need to undertake country capacity assessments was identified as the first critical activity needed for implementation of the action plan. At that end, the African Development Bank developed a country assessment method and related instruments to measure the capacity of African countries to produce agricultural statistics. The method was field-tested in Ghana, Rwanda, and Uganda. In all, four dimensions of national agricultural statistical systems are assessed, namely: (a) institutional infrastructure (prerequisite dimension); (b) resources (input dimension); (c) statistical methods and practices (throughput dimension); and (d) availability of statistical information (output dimension).

20.    The report on the country assessments carried out in 2016 shows that there is an improved overall performance of national agriculture statistical systems in Africa, with a general increase of 6.4 per cent in their capacities to generate more and better national agricultural statistics. It further highlights those countries that have shown signs of improvement in their capacity to produce relevant agricultural statistics, as well as those exhibiting some weakness. Data for 27 countries have been already uploaded to the website of the African Development Bank Group website (see http://dataportal.opendataforafrica.org/data#topic=MSCD).

# IV.  Primary areas of focus

## A.  Civil registration and vital statistics

### A continental institutional framework and programme

21.    Civil registration and vital statistics in Africa are being complied through the Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics, based on the policy and programmatic guidance provided by the African ministers responsible for civil registration through the resolutions adopted at the first three Conferences of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. The Conference has been institutionalized as a standing forum of the African Union Commission.

22.    The regional civil registration and vital statistics programme is buttressed by the regional core group formed by the key actors in this field on the continent, the pan-African institutions, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, working together within a common framework, and the above-mentioned Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics. Set up in 2011, the core group is intended to harmonize approaches, harness synergies and work to avoid duplication of efforts, as well as to provide technical and financial support to the Africa Programme. The core group arrangement is being formalized through a memorandum of understanding, which will ensure a more sustainable engagement by partners in the implementation of the Africa Programme.

**African Symposiums on Statistical Development as vehicle for advocacy**

23.    One of the key activities promoting the collaboration of actors in the field of civil registration and vital statistics at the country level (mainly statistical offices and civil registration offices) were the last five African Symposiums on Statistical Development, which had civil registration and vital statistics as their main focus. At the eleventh Symposium, the last one dedicated to the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics, the Directors-General of national statistical offices and civil registration offices of African States committed themselves to establishing a commission of registrars general at the continental level. The task force meeting to prepare for the establishment of such a commission was held in Vitoria Falls, Zimbabwe, from 17 to 20 October 2017.

**Partnership**

24.    The partnership on civil registration and vital statistics is composed of multiple developing partners, whose mandates are to help countries improve performance in this field and achieve the goals of the African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Decade 2017–2026. Coordination between the secretariat of the Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and developing partners is fundamental for the organization of the activities in this field and for the implementation of the strategic plan for the Africa Programme (2017–2021), as well as other related endeavours in African countries.

**Progress and challenges**

25.    Responding to the call in the declaration of the second Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, held in Durban, South Africa, to "Develop results-based monitoring and evaluation systems and tools to monitor and report on progress on civil registration and vital statistics", the secretariat of the Africa Programme for Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics developed a framework to document and monitor progress made by member States in the improvement of such systems. The monitoring report was prepared based on web-based monitoring results to an online review conducted by the secretariat of the Africa Programme in October 2016 to measure the progress achieved by the national statistics systems of each country. The report presents summary of the findings based on responses obtained from 39 countries out of the 54 member States that were requested to fill in the online monitoring form — a response rate of 72 per cent.

### 1. Rapid and comprehensive assessments and strategic plans

26. According to the monitoring report, more than half of the countries in Africa have conducted rapid and comprehensive assessments, some have developed strategic plans and few of them have begun to implement their strategic plans. Despite the remarkable progress achieved in the past few years, there remain a number of major challenges facing African civil registration and vital statistics systems.

### 2. Legislation

27. All countries in the region, except South Sudan, have laws and legal provisions for civil registration. However, in many countries existing laws are outdated and not aligned with recommended international standards. In more than one third of the countries, the civil registration law does not distinguish between late and delayed registration. For example, registration of marriage and divorce are not compulsory in many countries. The monitoring results showed that divorce registration is compulsory only in 17 out of the 39 countries that responded to the review. Nearly half of the countries (46 per cent) have no legal provision for transferring data from civil registration offices to government agencies in charge of compiling national vital statistics and producing annual reports.

### 3. Budgetary allocation

28. National governments allocate a budget line for the maintenance of the civil registration system. Nonetheless, monitoring results show that, in more than two thirds of the reporting countries, budgets are either inadequate or irregular. In five countries, the government does not make budgetary allocation for the civil registration system. Only 11 countries (28 per cent) have adequate human resources at all levels of their civil registration systems, yet in the case of 27 countries (67 per cent) human resources are inadequate at the local registration offices. More than half of the countries have no routine training schedule for civil registrars, and training sessions are conducted occasionally on an ad hoc basis.

### 4. Coordination

29. Nearly three quarters (74 per cent) of African countries have established high-level coordination bodies to provide oversight and guidance for national civil registration and vital statistics systems, but in half of those countries the coordination system is not effective. Although many countries have a formal inter-agency committee to facilitate these operations, collaboration remains insufficient.

### 5. Computerized civil registration systems

30. One third of the 39 reporting countries capture birth and death records electronically at all local registration offices. Only few countries employ mobile phone technology to notify birth and death occurrences at home or in health facilities. The monitoring results reveal that 29 out of the 39 countries have a national identification database and that 20 countries maintain a computerized database of civil registration records. However, the two systems are interoperable in only 13 countries.

### Conclusion

31. There is a need to pay particular attention to the five poorly functioning components of civil registration and vital statistics systems for most of the countries:

budgeting and human resources; coordination and monitoring; the use of information and communications technology and digitization; recording of the cause of death; and the production of vital statistics from civil registration data.

## B. Population and housing censuses

### Preparation for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in Africa

32. ECA undertook an assessment on country preparedness for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in Africa with a view to building institutional capacity in African countries in conducting the 2020 round. The purpose of the assessment included but was not limited to: (a) determining the current status of countries preparedness for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, and establishing their major challenges/best practices and key considerations for the 2020 census; (b) identifying country preparedness gaps; and (c) ensuring that in the 2020 round the data collected are relevant to national, regional and international policy, planning and reporting requirements.

33. An expert group meeting was organized in Nairobi from 19 to 22 July 2016 on the subject of the third African addendum to the *United Nations Principles and Recommendations on Population and Housing Censuses*. Subsequent, to that meeting, the African coordinating committee for the 2020 round of the census was also established.

34. The African Centre for Statistics and the Statistics Division co-organized the United Nations Regional Meeting on Disability Measurement and Statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme, held in Kampala, from 15 to 17 November 2016 as part of a series of regional meetings with the following objectives: (a) to review and discuss national experiences, including challenges faced and lessons learned, to measure the population with disabilities during censuses of the 2010 round; (b) to provide an opportunity to discuss strategies for the compilation of data on disability for the monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals; and (c) to foster intraregional cooperation aimed at enhancing national capacity in disability measurement and improving the quality of data for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals. The two United Nations entities are planning to organize a regional meeting in the United Republic of Tanzania in February 2018. The African Centre for Statistics and the Statistics Division also co-organized the United Nations Regional Workshop on the 2020 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses: International Standards and Contemporary Technologies, held in Lusaka from 20 to 23 March 2017.

## C. National accounts

35. As part of the African project on the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA), and to support countries in compiling, revising, updating and applying supply-use tables for economic policy research and analysis, ECA, jointly with the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Trade Organization, initiated a capacity-building programme on the compilation of supply-use tables in Africa. Despite the importance and usefulness of such tables, about half the countries in Africa have not yet compiled them.

36.   The capacity-building programme consists of a series of activities in three phases: an e-training module; a face-to-face seminar; and follow-up national workshops and on-site technical assistance. The main reference materials used for the e-training include the three ECA handbooks/guidebooks: a handbook on supply and use tables; a guidebook on using administrative data in national accounts; and a guidebook on accounting for the informal sector in the compilation of national accounts.

37.   Over 300 participants from 41 countries participated in the above training sessions. Among the participants, over 100 registered for a final assessment, demonstrating their confidence and commitment to higher quality national accounts statistics, which are essential for economic analysis, policymaking and monitoring and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

38.   Technical and advisory support was extended to a number of countries, upon their request, to strengthen the capacities of member States in the implementation of the 2008 SNA and to improve their national accounts and national statistical systems. Technical missions were undertaken in Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania and Togo and on the rebasing of the gross domestic product (GDP). The expected outcome of those missions is enhanced capacities in the production and dissemination of national accounts according 2008 SNA and economic statistics.

## D.   Environmental statistics and accounting

39.   There is a lack of related technical capacity in many countries in terms of data collection, processing, compilation, analysis and dissemination of environment statistics. To meet the challenges, ECA collaborated with the Statistics Division and the UNEP to initiate a capacity-building programme on environment statistics in Africa. The programme was aimed at raising awareness regarding the urgent need for environment statistics in current policymaking and development planning process, as well as for the development of technical expertise in the production of environment statistics in African countries.

40.   In June 2017, an e-training, led by the Statistics Division using the ECA platform, was employed for a discussion of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics 2013. The 2013 Framework was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-fourth session for the strengthening of environment statistics programmes in Member States. The Framework is a multi-purpose conceptual and statistical configuration that sets out the scope of environment statistics and provides an organizing structure to guide data collection and compilation at the national level. More than 200 participants from 37 African countries registered and participated in the e-training programme.

41.   Following the e-training, a face-to-face seminar was held in September 2017 in Kenya. The face-to-face seminar has: deepened the technical knowledge and skills of all participants in producing, processing, compiling and disseminating environment statistics based on the 2013 Framework; given a clear vision of the process for the mainstreaming of environment statistics in a national context; equipped participants with the ability to design and implement national action plans on environment statistics; and enabled countries to establish a foundation for environment statistics through the production of a compendium of environment statistics.

42.   Based on the positive experience with the 2013 Framework, a similar approach will be adopted to support countries in building natural capital accounts in line with the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA).

## E.   Gender statistics

43.   Stakeholders working in the field of gender statistics have been actively working in different strategic areas to achieve the objectives of the African Group on Gender Statistics. The main results include: (a) the development of a handbook for gender mainstreaming in African official statistics by ECA; (b) an online training toolkit on gender statistics; (c) a process for the development of a joint gender index from the African Gender and Development Index of ECA and the Africa Gender Equality Index of the African Development Bank; and (d) production of a gender statistics toolkit on women in the informal cross-border trade in Africa.

44.   Activities undertaken on training in gender statistics include: (a) a regional training workshop to improve use of existing data for the monitoring of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa; (b) a regional training workshop on the online gender statistics toolkit; (c) a workshop on "Measuring women's representation in local government in the ECA region"; and (d) a national training workshop on gender statistics in Uganda. Other key studies are described below.

**Women's economic empowerment: boosting female entrepreneurship in Africa**

45.   A report has been initiated, which includes: quantitative research into the subject of women's economic empowerment; the profiling of female entrepreneurs; cataloguing of the constraints they face; and an investigation of gender gaps in productivity in five selected countries, including subregional representation (Angola, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt and Mali). The key premise of the report is that elevating the productivity of self-employed women is fundamental to their economic empowerment, and has strong links to their social and political empowerment.

**African Women's Report: 2016–2017**

46.   A study on the theme "Securing women's rights to social protection in Africa" was undertaken during the biennium 2016-2017, with the goal of documenting the constraints facing women and girls in gaining access to quality social protection services in Africa. The study used a two-pronged approach involving in-country empirical studies in five selected countries, namely Chad, Kenya, Namibia, Mauritania and Senegal, representing ECA's five subregions. The empirical research, which was combined with secondary research covering all African countries, resulted in a regional synthesis research report, which provided a cross-country analysis of the impediments to securing women's access to quality social protection services.

**The African Union Commission: the African Gender Scorecard**

47.   In 2015, the African Union Commission, supported by ECA, published the first African Gender Scorecard. The Scorecard is a simple yet comprehensive tool whose main goal is to provide the African Union Commission and its member States with an implementation mechanism, as well as a monitoring and accountability tool, to achieve the key objectives of Agenda 2063 from a gender perspective.

## F. Implementation of the action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Food Security and Rural Statistics

**Technical assistance**

48. To help African countries improve and strengthen institutional, organizational and technical capacities for the development of their national agricultural statistical systems, a technical assistance component has been developed as part of the action plan of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural Food Security and Rural Statistics in Africa. The technical assistance component is structured around following four elements: (a) the development of institutional and organizational capacities; (b) the design of strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics as an integral part of the national strategy for the development of statistics; (c) the development and harmonization of data sources; and (d) data harmonization and management.

49. The technical assistance component is being implemented by the African Development Bank across the continent, and mechanisms have been put in place for accelerating and scaling up related activities to achieve the objectives of the action plan. At the outset of the implementation period for the action plan, the Bank has assisted countries in assessing their capacity to produce agricultural statistics, build a strong and sustainable institutional framework and foundation for agricultural statistics and identify their priority technical assistance needs. This has been done and achieved through: (a) country assessments of the development of national agricultural statistical systems (undertaken in 2014 and 2016); and (b) the development of national Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics (completed for 24 countries thus far).

**Training**

50. ECA is responsible for the execution of the training component of the "action plan for Africa". The purpose of the training component is to strengthen the capacity of the agencies concerned with the collection, consolidation and use of agricultural statistics. The methodology employed will be to increase the knowledge, skills and competencies of their staff. Emphasis will also be placed on strengthening and sustaining the capacity of statistical training centres to develop and to deliver quality training in agricultural statistics and statistics-related subjects.

51. To date, over 85 various training materials and syllabuses have been produced on topics pertinent to agricultural statistics; over 72 scholarships have been provided for master and post-graduate level studies in the field of agricultural statistics for students and experts from national statistical offices and ministries of agriculture. To ensure that partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries of the training components are kept informed about the state of affairs with regard to the implementation of these activities, ECA produces a quarterly newsletter and disseminates it widely.

## G. Revolutionizing data management and dissemination in Africa

52. In 2012, the African Union Summit of African Heads of State adopted a resolution calling on the African Development Bank, ECA and the African Union Commission to urgently support the efforts of countries to improve data management and dissemination systems. Following this directive, the African Development Bank launched the Africa Information Highway initiative, which involved installing open data platforms in all 54 African countries and 16 regional and subregional

organizations in order to facilitate data collection, management and dissemination. Live data links were established between the African Development Bank and national statistical offices, central banks and line ministries on the one hand, and development partners, international organizations and other users, including the general public and the private sector, on the other.

53. One key feature of the Africa Information Highway is its full compliance with the standards of statistical data and metadata exchange so as to facilitate easy data exchange within and across countries and between partner institutions. In this regard, the African Development Bank has been working closely with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to facilitate the reporting of macroeconomic data from African countries to IMF using the statistical data and metadata exchange protocols. This approach has now been extended to data reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals following the launch, in 2016, of the Sustainable Development Goal data hubs as part of the Africa Information Highway. All African countries now have a fully statistical data and metadata exchange-compliant Sustainable Development Goals data hub that they will use for managing, exchanging and reporting their data relative to the individual Goals.

54. The overall objective of the Africa Information Highway initiative is to significantly increase public access to official and other statistics across Africa, while at the same time supporting African countries to improve data quality, management and dissemination. The initiative also responds to the demand of the African Development Bank for timely data to inform its results measurement framework, facilitate the monitoring of the development impact of the interventions of the African Development Bank on the continent and ensure that these are in line with its "high fives" transformation agenda for Africa (information on the Africa Information Highway initiative can be accessed at http://dataportal.opendataforafrica.org).

## H. Geographical information in Africa

### Strategic framework for the integration of statistical and geospatial information in Africa

55. ECA is developing a global strategic framework for the integration of statistical and geospatial information in African countries. The strategy outlines some of the policy principles on how to mainstream geospatial technology into the work of statistical offices through training, data and processes. The strategy includes a deconvolution mechanism to help break down the framework at the national level so that Member States can adopt, adapt and apply their own national statistical spatial frameworks based on the prevailing environment and realities in each country. It is expected that the integration of statistical and geospatial information will benefit Member States in providing services that are of the greatest value to users, with a particular focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda 2063, the 2020 round of censuses and national regional priorities.

### Geospatial information for sustainable development in Africa: an African action plan on global geospatial information management

56. ECA has led the development of an African action plan on global geospatial information management, which created new partnerships with national officials in all geospatial fields as well as non-governmental organizations, academia, research institutions and the private sector. The action plan conceptualizes the overarching principle of holistic geospatial governance that strengthens the significance of

geospatial information for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa. It outlines the essential actions with related responsibilities, timescales and costs that will steer the future implementation of the initiative in Africa. Through the action plan, Member States have agreed on a basic set of concepts, practices, standards and guidelines for the development and management of geospatial information in Africa.

**Geospatial information management support for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals**

57. In supporting the implementation and reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals, ECA has developed a matrix identifying the geospatial datasets that are labelled according to the critical need for the monitoring and implementation of the indicators of each Sustainable Development Goal. This work is ongoing and will be aligned with the activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Working Group on Geospatial Information.

## I. Promoting the use of mobile technology in data collection

58. ECA is implementing a project on the use of mobile technologies to collect data. The project is funded under the Development Account and will be implemented in two phases so that the results of phase I can be incorporated into the findings for the roll-out of the methodologies to phase II countries. The main objective of the project is to improve the capacity of countries in using mobile technology to make statistical data available and accessible in order to support evidence-based policymaking. It is implemented through a series of pilot projects involving six countries in phase I (Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Kenya, Tunisia and Zimbabwe) and an additional five in phase II (Egypt, Gabon, Lesotho, Mali and Uganda).

59. The pilot projects are designed to be executed by each country's national statistical office, in collaboration with a national training and research institute designated by the national statistical office. The training and research institutes, in collaboration with the national statistical offices, are expected to undertake applied research to adapt and develop appropriate concepts, systems and methodologies for the use of mobile technologies in data collection and the integration of the collected data into standard statistical processes. Another aspect of the project is the concept of the "citizen as data collector". The objective is to develop procedures and tools that enable citizens or institutions, untrained in statistics, to submit data on their activities for the production of statistics.

60. Overall, phase I of the Development Account project was successfully carried out by all pilot countries. They have all developed in-house capacity and gained skills and confidence in using mobile technology in data collection. However, in many pilot countries, financial resources remain the main obstacle for the sustainability of the data collection process, with mobile devices beyond the financial reach of the project. Phase II of the project was launched with an inception workshop, held in Yaoundé from 7 to 9 March 2017, which brought together phase I and II countries. While phase I countries all focused on the consumer price index survey to develop their application, phase II countries are focusing on different surveys, such as the survey of the civil registration system, the community information system and the manufacturing and higher institution survey: all countries will experiment with self-enumeration.

## J. Implementing the data revolution in Africa

**Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa as a vehicle for the data revolution on the continent**

61.    Within the framework of Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, African countries consider that the data revolution will be conducted by a unified Africa. It is in this regard that they gave a mandate to pan-African institutions and to the African Union Institute for Statistics to pilot this road map. Substantively, it is about elaborating and implementing the African pact on the data revolution. This pact will be an integral part of the implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.

62.    The countries of Africa were some of the most active participants in the "Informing a data revolution" project carried out by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century in 2014 and 2015. The project covered 13 African countries (Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda) of which three (Burundi, Cabo Verde and the Democratic Republic of Congo) participated in the in-depth studies organized by the secretariat of the Partnership. Taking into account the realities and challenges of the African statistical system, the project developed a road map for a country-led data revolution, which was also adopted at the global level. The road map proposes an implementation approach that was accepted by all stakeholders working in the field of statistics at the national and international levels.

63.    A high-level conference on the data revolution in Africa was held in March 2015 as a side event at the eighth annual African Union-ECA joint conference of ministers of economy, planning and finance. The meeting was organized in response to the request of the Heads of State and Government at the twenty-third African Union Summit held in Malabo in July 2014. The ninth annual session of the African Union Committee of Directors Generals of National Statistics Offices discussed the Africa Data Consensus, the outcome of the high-level conference on the data revolution in Africa, contains the core principles on which the data revolution will become a reality in Africa. At the ninth annual session of the African Union Committee of Directors Generals it was concluded that: all discussions on the data revolution should be under the auspices of the United Nations at the global level and under the auspices of the African Union for continental matters; and further guidance was provided including the data revolution in Africa as an emerging theme in the revision of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.

## K. African Statistics Day, 18 November

**A long-standing initiative**

64.    Since the 1990s, African Statistics Day has been celebrated annually on 18 November. It is a continent-wide event and one of the most visible and widely observed occasions to promote an awareness of the importance of statistics and of data-driven policies and researches in Africa. African Statistics Day has generated widespread interest and coverage not only on the part of members of statistical communities, but also from journalists and the general public. Many countries have organized celebrations beyond the standard arrangement of a day-long workshop and

seminars, to include elementary schools, college classrooms, media and other public arenas in order to broaden statistics and data familiarity among teachers and students.

## L. Africa Symposium on Statistical Development

65. The annual Africa Symposium on Statistical Development, launched in January 2006, is a country-led initiative organized in African countries on a rotational basis. It provides a forum for the discussion of issues pertaining to statistical development and a platform for the exchange of practical experiences and best practices among African countries. The Symposium assembles representatives of all major national stakeholders, including the heads of national statistical offices, economic and finance ministries and central banks, representatives of international and regional organizations and development partners.

66. The first six Africa Symposiums on Statistical Development focused on the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. Since then, all but four African countries have successfully undertaken the censuses. The next five symposiums made a big push for the development of civil registration and vital statistics in Africa. Following this push, more than half of African countries have made significant progress towards the development of data collection of these statistics. At the eleventh Africa Symposium on Statistical Development, held in Libreville, Gabon, in 2015, a resolution was adopted that shifted the focus area of the symposiums from civil registration and vital statistics to economic statistics and national accounts for the next five symposiums, beginning in 2016.

## V. Actions to be taken by the Statistical Commission

67. **The Statistical Commission is invited to:**

(a) **Take note of the ongoing progress made by African countries, pan-African institutions and other development partners in support of statistical development in Africa towards the implementation of national, continental and global development agendas;**

(b) **Call upon African countries to mainstream statistical strategies into national development plans and budgeting processes;**

(c) **Discuss the importance of giving high priority to statistics in supporting evidence-based decision-making processes and the need to allocate adequate financial resources for the implementation of national statistics programmes;**

(d) **Call upon development partners to scale up their support to the African statistical system in the implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.**

_____