



Economic Commission for Africa
Statistical Commission for Africa
Seventh meeting
Addis Ababa (online), 13–15 October 2020

Draft conclusions and recommendations of the seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa

A. Statistical capacity development in Africa

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Taking note of ongoing statistical capacity development at the national, subregional and continental levels in Africa in the context of sustainable development and the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic,

1. Approves the creation of an African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics, composed of ten Directors General of national statistical offices, and requests the Economic Commission for Africa to undertake its operationalization;
2. *Calls upon* member States to use statistical development indicators on an annual basis to measure their statistical development progress;
3. *Calls upon* pan-African organizations and partners to work in close collaboration and foster synergies to support African countries, in particular those with the lowest levels of statistical development, to mitigate the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;
4. *Calls upon* countries to strengthen integration between geospatial information systems and other statistical systems;
5. *Calls upon* member States to implement the statistical leadership programme within their national statistical systems, and development partners to support the initiatives of countries in the area of leadership training.

B. Sustainable Development Goal indicators

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Taking note of the continuing efforts and initiatives undertaken to track the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, subregional and continental levels in Africa in the context of sustainable development and under the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak,

1. *Calls upon* African countries to continue aligning their national development plans and budgeting processes with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, other regional frameworks, such as Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and international frameworks;



2. *Also calls upon* African countries to establish or enhance a whole-of-society approach to pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals that ensures the participation and engagement of all stakeholders and, in particular, line ministries and departments, in recognition of the interlinkages among the Goals;

3. *Calls upon* the regional economic communities and the United Nations subregions to synergize their collaboration and partnership to accelerate efforts to track progress towards fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

C. 2020 round of population and housing censuses

The Statistical Commission for Africa

1. *Calls upon* member States to renew their commitment to the conduct of population and housing censuses during the 2020 round of such censuses and calls, in particular, for technical assistance and advisory services for countries in conflict and post-conflict countries and also for those that have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

2. *Invites* the Bureau of the Statistical Commission for Africa, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa, to conduct an assessment of the census undertaking and to identify factors contributing to the failure by countries to conduct a census during the 2020 round;

3. *Reiterates* its call to partners to stimulate national funding of population and housing censuses;

4. *Recommends* the conduct of a census during the period 2015–2024, given that population and housing census data are indispensable for monitoring progress made in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and national development frameworks;

5. *Also recommends* a transition from manual to digital systems and the use of improved methods and new technologies, which will increase the reliability and accessibility of statistics in a timely manner.

D. Civil registration, vital statistics and the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Noting its concern about the low level of political will to support the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics,

Taking into consideration the recommendation of the fourth Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, held in 2017, which called for the establishment of a subcommittee responsible for civil registration and vital statistics under the relevant specialized technical committee of the African Union, in accordance with existing rules and regulations,

Taking into consideration also the request of the fifth Conference of African Ministers responsible for Civil Registration, held in 2019, that the Department of Economic Affairs of the African Union place on the agenda of the fourth meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Finance the issue of a sub-committee on civil registration, with a view to accelerating its full operationalization,

1. *Calls for* the establishment of a small committee composed of Registrars General and Directors General of national statistical offices to

explore ways to revamp the continental commitment to the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics;

2. *Recommends* the following key actions for the transformation of the performance of civil registration systems:

(a) Civil registration systems and the vital statistics that are generated must be strengthened as core components of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

(b) Civil registration systems need to harness the potential of technologies, in particular mobile phones, which are now widely available;

(c) Member States are encouraged to establish or revamp national population registers that have as their foundations civil registration systems, which would enable governments to derive robust statistical data about their populations on a real-time and continuous basis;

(d) Member States need to establish automated civil registration, vital statistics and identity management systems that are based on the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda framework.

E. Implementation of the African programme on gender statistics 2017–2021

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Taking note of the continuing work for the development of gender statistics on the continent and supporting other work priorities of the African programme on gender statistics,

1. *Endorses* a minimum set of gender indicators for Africa;
2. *Approves* the revision of the second phase of the African programme on gender statistics, in order to align it with COVID-19-related methodological and data requirements;
3. *Calls upon* member States to support the development of gender-related administrative data.

F. 2008 System of National Accounts

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Taking note of the progress made by countries and the substantial technical support provided by international, regional, and subregional organizations and development partners in respect of the 2008 System of National Accounts, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, and other economics statistics frameworks,

1. *Calls for* the continuation of existing programmes¹ that are designed to support participation by countries in the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and related economic statistics;

2. *Requests* that specific initiatives be undertaken to support member States that are lagging behind in the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts;

¹ Including programmes focused on gross-domestic-product rebasing, quarterly gross-domestic-product statistics, supply-use tables, the 2021 round of the International Comparison Programme, consumer price indexes, and trade in value added, among others.

3. *Recommends* regional and international coordination of the support provided to countries and the adaptation of development strategies and cooperation to the new situation due to the pandemic conditions.

G. United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management: report on regional activities in Africa

The Statistical Commission for Africa

1. *Urges* that steps be taken to ensure that the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework is incorporated into national development plans and fully contextualized at the regional level to expand current national data systems to new data frontiers such as earth observation and geospatial big data;

2. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, with assistance from the secretariat of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, to develop a comprehensive programme for modernizing geospatial activities in Africa as a vehicle to mobilize resources to enhance the capacity of member States and as a strategy for a geospatial response to emergency crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

H. Standard guiding principles of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework for the integration of statistical and geospatial information in Africa

The Statistical Commission for Africa

1. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa, with assistance from the Regional Committee for Africa of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, to provide policy-level support for the African statistical geospatial framework, and to further prioritize and propose guidelines to advance the implementation of national and regional action plans to integrate statistical and geospatial information in Africa;

2. *Recommends* that the Economic Commission for Africa continue to support African countries in building and developing their statistical-geospatial information infrastructure in preparation for the 2020 round of censuses and for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Also recommends* that census data dissemination be diversified by using web-based mapping, cloud applications and services and mobile technology to reach a wider audience, with a view to the increased appreciation of census products and of statistical work in general;

4. *Calls for* the development of a common regional framework of standards and tools, taking into account their national specific conditions, while aligning the framework with existing internationally agreed standards;

5. *Encourages* countries to develop their respective national statistical-geospatial frameworks in accordance with internationally agreed guidelines and principles.

I. Statistical activities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: the experiences of member States

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Considering the circumstances and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic,

1. *Takes note* of the experiences shared by member States relating to their statistical activities and operationalization of programmes, in particular,

the experience of Ghana in the conduct of a population and housing census programme; of Zambia in the conduct of ongoing household surveys; of South Africa in the conduct of data collection for its consumer price index; and of Namibia in the areas of civil registration and vital statistics;

2. *Also takes note* of the experiences shared on health statistics by the World Health Organization and its conclusion that building the capacities of countries in respect of health statistics and mortality surveillance would be critical to improving health services that have been greatly affected during the COVID-19 pandemic;

3. *Urges* partners and governments to endeavour to build strong monitoring systems and health information systems at the national and local levels.

J. Private-sector experience with big data

The Statistical Commission for Africa

1. *Takes note* of the private-sector's experience with big data in Africa and its role as a service provider;

2. *Encourages* close collaboration with national statistical systems in gaining access to and the use of data and technology in support of development programmes in Africa;

3. *Calls upon* ECA to constitute a roster of experts to assist member States in the use of big data.

K. United Nations global platform and regional hub on big data for official statistics

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Noting the importance of the modernization of official statistics, including, in particular, the use of big data, to remain relevant in the evidence business,

1. *Calls for* the establishment of data science departments/units within national statistical offices in order to develop applications for the use of big data, to integrate this data source in data plans and activities, and to establish a robust partnership among the Economic Commission for Africa, the regional hub, and the United Nations global platform being developed by the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics, to build capacity with a view to making data accessible and to using the technological tools that are already available;

2. *Recommends* strengthened collaboration with the African Union and the African Development Bank on big data activities and initiatives in the region.

L. Statistical coordination among United Nations agencies

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Noting the coordination among United Nations agencies built around the opportunity and issue-based coalitions,

1. *Expresses its support* for such coordination between the Economic Commission for Africa and all United Nations entities in Africa, in order to avoid the duplication of efforts;

2. *Requests* national statistical offices, in collaboration with the United Nations country teams, to support the proposed United Nations strategy for statistics and, in particular, opportunity and issue-based coalition 1, on strengthened integrated data and statistical systems for sustainable development.

M. Open Data

The Statistical Commission for Africa

1. *Recommends* the creation of an African working group on open data, comprising representatives of national statistical offices, with support from the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and the Economic Commission for Africa, to develop a road map to support member States in developing legal frameworks, procedural manuals, harmonized frameworks according to international standards, and data portals for the purpose of providing access to their statistical databases;

2. *Request* ECA, in collaboration with the African Development Bank, and the African Union Commission, to lead the identification of African open data champions.

N. Data science

The Statistical Commission for Africa

1. *Takes note* of the adoption by Rwanda of its national data revolution policy, followed by the establishment, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa and the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of a data science campus, by building a data system and investing in information and communications technology infrastructure;

2. *Recommends* the establishment of an African community of practice for data science, to advocate the development of data science capacity in national statistical offices and to share lessons learned between the United Nations global platform being developed by the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics and regional hubs;

3. *Also recommends* that the Office for National Statistics of the United Kingdom continue to collaborate with statistics training centres in Africa.

O. Urban data

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Reaffirming the critical need to strengthen urban data and statistics through national statistical development systems and processes,

1. *Calls upon* member States to improve the rural and urban disaggregation of the indicators pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, through national statistical development systems;

2. *Requests* the Economic Commission for Africa to continue providing technical assistance to member States to strengthen their urban data and statistics, guided by the core working group of the African programme on urbanization data and statistics.

P. Response by the African Development Bank to the COVID-19 pandemic

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Takes note of the establishment by the African Development Bank of a crisis-response facility to provide support to African countries to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing additional resources for public health interventions, social protection programmes and protection of their economies.

Q. Statistical capacity-building programmes of partners of the Economic Commission for Africa

The Statistical Commission for Africa,

Welcoming the establishment of the African Union Institute for Statistics and statistical capacity-building programmes by partners of the Economic Commission for Africa,

1. *Urges* the creation of the African Statistical Fund, in line with the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics;
2. *Calls for* the establishment of a microdata database on household surveys in Africa and for the improved coordination and advocacy of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa for the period 2017–2026;
3. *Welcomes* the statistical capacity-building programme of the African Development Bank and calls for strong advocacy for African Development Bank country teams to complement the Bank's statistical capacity-building programme;
4. *Calls upon* the African Development Bank to harness technology more effectively and to promote digitalization, so as to enhance the efficiency of its work and its furtherance of the Africa Information Highway initiative;
5. *Calls upon* the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century to enhance statistical data on development financing, and requests the Partnership to strengthen its assistance to member States in building the communications skills of statisticians within African national statistical systems;
6. *Requests* member States to issue or update existing statistical legal frameworks so that they are in compliance with current statistical developments, with a view to building international trust;
7. *Urges* member States to elaborate comprehensive national statistical programmes through national strategies for the development of statistics that are fully aligned with national development plans, so as to ensure domestic funding of statistical activities;
8. *Calls upon* regional and international partners to support member States in the transformation and digitalization of their statistical information systems;
9. *Commends* the efforts deployed by national statistical systems in monitoring and assessing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
10. *Invites* regional and international partners to support member States in developing their capacities to provide timely and accurate population and infrastructure data to enhance their governments' response to the COVID-19 pandemic through geospatial datasets, analyses and tools under an open, non-commercial license.