



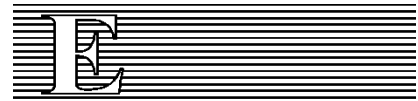
**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**



AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

First Joint Session of the Committee of Directors General
of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical
Commission for Africa

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I. Background and rationale

1. The Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa) was established in 2005 by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development as the continent's apex statistical body. It operates within the framework of the policies and procedures of the United Nations and under the general supervision of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.¹ Its members comprise African countries, represented by heads of national statistics offices. It is also a forum where the African Symposium on Statistical Development, the Forum on Statistical Development in Africa and other initiatives report on the progress of their work. The Statistical Commission for Africa meets on a biennial basis.

2. The Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices was established in 2007 by the African Union (AU) Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance. It meets every year under the auspices of the African Union Commission (AUC) to discuss statistical development issues in Africa, including the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.

3. While members of both the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical Commission for Africa are mainly Directors General of national statistics offices, they report to different governing bodies. The Committee of Directors General of National Statistical Offices reports to the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Statistical Commission for Africa reports to the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. As the constituencies of the two conferences are almost the same, from 2008, they started convening in joint sessions known as the Joint Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (hereafter referred to as the Conference of Ministers).

4. The Conference of Ministers would have continued to receive two separate reports from the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical Commission for Africa, comprising the same group of heads of NSOs. In order to reduce the number of statistical forums at the continental level and streamline the work of the two intergovernmental statistical processes, the Conference of Ministers had suggested that the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical Commission for Africa should merge and form a single forum, on a par with the United Nations Statistical Commission, to meet every year.² In response to that request, the Seventh meeting of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices, held from 5 to 7 December 2013 in Johannesburg, South Africa, recommended that it would hold joint sessions with the Statistical Commission for Africa from 2014. The joint sessions were called the Joint Session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical Commission for Africa (hereafter referred to as the Joint Session).

¹ Since its inception, ECA had set up subsidiary bodies as part of the machinery to fulfil its mandate in different thematic areas, including statistics. In this connection, the Conference of African Statisticians was established in 1959; the Joint Conference of Planners, Statisticians, and Demographers including a Committee on Statistics resulting from a merger of the Conference of African Statisticians, the Conference of African Planners, and the Conference of African Demographers in 1980; the Joint Conference of Planners, Statisticians, Population and Information Specialists in 1994 when information specialists joined the previous body; and it was renamed as the Committee on Development Information in 1997. It became known as the Statistical Commission of Africa in 2005.

² Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa. (2009); p.11.

5. These terms of reference are meant to serve as a tool for the smooth functioning of the Joint Session.

II. Objectives

6. The Joint Session will continue to contribute to the progress of policies on statistics and statistical activities on the continent, as each body had done hitherto, in a more integrated manner. The Joint Session will consider: issues of concern in national and continental statistical development; methodological issues, coordination and integration of the African statistical system; support for technical cooperation activities in statistics; and organizational matters. It will provide strategic direction for the work of ECA and AUC on all relevant areas of statistics and statistical development in Africa.

7. The specific objectives of the Joint Session are to:

(a) Provide a forum for member States to review and advise on the statistical programmes of pan-African institutions such as AUC, ECA and the African Development Bank (AfDB), and ensure their relevance to the needs of countries;

(b) Work with the pan-African institutions in developing and implementing continental frameworks, strategies and initiatives aimed at supporting the African integration agenda;

(c) Promote the development and improvement of national statistical systems, and strive to ensure the quality and comparability of statistics nationally and internationally, in line with the fundamental principles of official statistics, and bearing in mind the recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission, United Nations specialized agencies and other relevant organizations;

(d) Enhance coordination of statistical activities of these pan-African institutions and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the sustainable development of statistics on the continent;

(e) Stimulate close coordination of the statistical activities of international organizations, so as to achieve greater uniformity in concepts and definitions, and to reduce the reporting burden on national statistics offices on the continent;

(f) Promote the African Charter on Statistics and ensure close coordination among the pan-African institutions and other relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the Charter as well as the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa ; and

(g) Contribute to the United Nations work on developing a statistical spatial framework, as a global standard for the integration of statistical and geospatial information, and support efforts to adapt it to Africa's specific circumstances.

III. Membership

8. The heads of the national statistics offices of African countries will be the members of the Joint Session.

IV. Activities

9. The Joint Session will provide a forum for work on all statistical matters that are of interest to its members. In particular, it may:

(a) Promote development of the national statistical systems of the region, and improve the quality and comparability of statistics they produce, in line with the fundamental principles of official statistics;

(b) Serve as the steering committee of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa and the African Charter on Statistics;

(c) Support the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics as well as the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa and conduct regular reviews of progress reports;

(d) Ensure that all countries design and implement a national strategy for the development of statistics, and review the progress report on its implementation;

(e) Ensure coordination with the United Nations Statistical Commission to map out actions to be taken by ECA, AUC, AfDB and other development partners towards the sustainable development of statistics in Africa;

(f) Examine progress, identify problems and propose solutions to existing and emerging issues on statistical development in Africa;

(g) Participate in the establishment of methodologies, norms and standards at the international level and oversee the adoption of these internationally agreed methodologies, norms and standards and practices based on Africa's specific circumstances;

(h) Review the relevance of regional statistical training and on-job-training programmes to the needs of the countries of the region and promote training of African statisticians;

(i) Promote exchange of experiences, peer learning, technical cooperation and data sharing among African countries and institutions; and support initiatives to establish and develop African centres of excellence in statistics;

(j) Ensure the coordination of statistical work and mechanisms, and their implementation on the continent;

(k) Advocate for resource mobilization and technical cooperation in support of statistical development in Africa;

(l) Review and make recommendations on the statistical work programme of the ECA African Centre for Statistics and that of the AUC Statistics Division;³

³ "Statistics Division of AUC" would be replaced by "STATAFRIC" or any other designation it might be given in the future.

(m) Promote the collection and dissemination of internationally comparable statistics of African countries as required by policymakers, enterprises, researchers and the general public on the continent;

(n) Ensure that the secretariat disseminates its findings to national statistics offices, subregional, regional and international organizations, enterprises or any other users;

(o) Recommend studies that may be required to further the objectives of the Joint Session and the African statistical system;

(p) Examine emerging trends in statistical development in Africa and globally and present the state of knowledge;

(q) Conduct studies, make recommendations, and provide information and other statistical services when requested by the Conference of Ministers.

10. Where necessary, the Joint Session may amend its priorities and methods to meet new requirements and maintain a balance between matters of current concern and the longer-term development aspects of the African statistical system.

V. Bureau

11. The Joint Session will elect a bureau in accordance with its rules of procedure⁴ and in consultation with the secretariat. The Bureau will serve as a steering body of the Joint Session. The members of the bureau will devote ample time to discharging their duties during their term in office. The Chairperson of the Bureau will chair the meetings of the Joint Session. Where necessary, the Bureau, in consultation with the secretariat, may convene a special meeting in between the regular ones.

VI. Secretariat

12. The AUC Statistics Division and the ECA African Centre for Statistics will jointly serve as the secretariat of the Joint Session. The secretariat will make such documents and facilities as have been approved by ECA and AUC available to the meeting. It will also: handle official contacts, correspondence with governmental and non-governmental experts, as well as experts from international agencies; assist in the scheduling of meetings and other activities for adoption by the Joint Session; prepare the report of the Joint Session; and follow up on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Session.

VII. Other participants and observers

13. Standing invitations will be extended to AfDB, the African Capacity-Building Foundation, the Africa Symposium on Statistical Development, the regional economic communities, the United Nations Statistics Division and African Young Statisticians to participate in all Joint Sessions.

⁴ The draft rules of procedure of the Joint Session that will govern its work, its Bureau, and the secretariat have been compiled for use in conjunction with this document.

14. The secretariat or the Bureau may invite the statistical entities of other African regional and subregional organizations, representatives of data users of African countries, African intergovernmental organizations, national statistical associations, national spatial data infrastructure, African training institutions, civil society organizations and others as observers to the meetings of the Joint Session.

VIII. Sessions

15. The Joint Session will meet every year under the joint auspices of AUC and ECA, at a time and venue set by the secretariat. The secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau, may accept a request from an African Government to host its regular meeting in its country (see rules and procedures on this subject).

IX. Report

16. The Joint Session will submit an annual report to the Joint Annual Meetings of AU-ECA Ministers.

X. Task teams

17. The Joint Session, in consultation with the secretariat, may establish, maintain, retire or dissolve an African working group, friends of the chair, city groups or any other relevant group to fulfill specific statistical objectives. The form and scope of a task team is determined by the terms of reference created for the group, per the rules of procedures of the joint session.

XI. Amendments to terms of reference

18. The Joint Session may table any changes made to its terms of reference before the Conference of Ministers.