



United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

African Statistics Day 2016

Strengthening economic statistics for regional integration, structural transformation and sustainable development

African Statistics Day 2016 will be celebrated on **18 November 2016**. Each year Africa celebrates this day to raise public awareness of the importance of statistics in all aspects of socioeconomic life. The theme of the Day this year is “**Strengthening economic statistics for regional integration, structural transformation and sustainable development**”.

Why is strengthening economic statistics important?

High-quality economic statistics are critical to Africa’s regional integration and economic transformation, and in achieving the aims set by the United Nations in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and by the African Union in Agenda 2063 – “*The Africa we want*”. They play a central role in recognizing and defining development issues, informing policy design, monitoring and evaluation and forecasting future trends. Economic statistics, and in particular national accounts data, provide a comprehensive assessment of the performance of a country’s economy over time. A strong national statistical system with good infrastructure of collection, processing, compilation, analysis, dissemination and archiving for all economic statistics, is vital to the national economy and development. It helps to inform evidence-based decisions and policymaking, which stimulate economic growth, foster regional integration and trade and promote socioeconomic development.

Current initiatives in the area of economic statistics

The African Common Project on the implementation of the 2008 United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA) is making steady progress in assisting countries to improve their economic statistics. The SNA is an overarching coordinating framework for economic statistics in two important ways: as a conceptual framework for ensuring the consistency of the definitions, standards and classifications used in official statistics; and as an accounting framework to ensure the numerical consistency of data drawn from different sources. The African Common Project has brought together regional economic communities, Afristat (the Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa), pan-African institutions (the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the African Union), regional and international organizations and development partners to assist countries in implementing the SNA. The project supports the efforts of African countries not only to move towards adopting and implementing the SNA but also to adhere to international statistical standards, and to produce timely, high-quality and harmonized economic statistics and national accounts in support of good economic governance, regional integration and sustainable development.

How economic statistics foster regional integration?

Regional integration enhances economic growth and development. It is a key strategy for strengthening intraregional trade, and is expected to produce considerable economic gains for Africa. The progress of regional integration must be supported by high-quality, timely and comparable economic statistics. The statistics provide data for tracking various aspects of regional integration, including trade, infrastructure, labour mobility, energy, -capital investment, productive capacity and monetary and financial integration. As countries continue to pursue development policies and programmes to accelerate regional integration and cooperation arrangements inspired by the Abuja Treaty, which established an African Economic Community, economic statistics will be an integral component of an integrated, harmonized and streamlined African economic community.

How economic statistics promote structural economic transformation?

“Africa Rising” is now a reality, and the growth of Africa is one of the most exciting and important stories in the world today. The sustainable growth and development of Africa call for structural transformation of its economies. Economic statistics are an essential tool for promoting structural transformation, tracking the reallocation of resources from less productive to more productive sectors, boosting the contribution of manufacturing sector to GDP, shifting traditional agricultural employment to the agro-industry sector, advocating a demographic transition from high to low birth and death rates and supporting a rise in urbanization.

Economic statistics and the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to leave no one behind. They aspire to transform the world in which we live, and form the new global development framework. The SDGs encompass the interlinkages between the three dimensions of economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability - all crucially linked to economic statistics. To achieve the SDGs and the goals of Agenda 2063, it is imperative to put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism for economic statistics, to track progress, to monitor national accounts and financial resources allocated to the set priorities, and to assess the overall impact of key policies and programmes in meeting the SDGs. Countries must strengthen the capacity of their national statistical systems to collect, collate and analyse data. This in turn will ensure a reliable supply of core economic statistics needed to monitor and evaluate progress towards the SDGs.

The future of building and compiling African economic statistics is bright and full of hope. We invite you to participate in the celebration of African Statistics Day on 18 November 2016, and champion the strengthening of economic statistics for regional integration, structural economic transformation and sustainable development.