
African Centre for Statistics
Forum on African Statistical Development
Ninth meeting

Addis Ababa (online), 14 December 2020

Concept note

A. Background

1. The Forum on African Statistical Development is an initiative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), with support from the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) and the World Bank. Representatives of 12 international organizations, 4 donor institutions and 17 regional and subregional agencies attended the first meeting of the Forum, held in Addis Ababa in May 2004, and endorsed the establishment of the Forum, with the following main functions: (a) to have an overview of statistical activities, including assistance and training in Africa; (b) to set up a permanent system for monitoring statistical development in Africa; and (c) to strengthen modalities for cooperation, with a view to leveraging each partner's comparative advantage.

2. The meetings of the Forum bring together representatives from African national statistical offices, statistical training centres, international, regional and subregional institutions, bilateral agencies, international programmes and initiatives, foundations and other institutions, with the ultimate objective to render more efficient and effective the support made available to countries under the framework of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonization, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability.

3. This support is needed more than ever given that national statistical systems are facing several challenges due to the unprecedented global crisis brought on by the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic since the beginning of 2020. Indeed, the various strategies implemented by governments to contain the pandemic have caused widespread socioeconomic disruption. The measures put in place by governments have also affected the implementation of statistical programmes, and thus limited the capacity of national statistical systems to respond to demands for data and statistical services in a timely manner.

4. A survey on the impact of COVID-19 on national statistical systems in the region, conducted by the African Centre for Statistics in early April, showed that data collection programmes had been severely curtailed and that, given the work practices of national statistical offices, their resources and responsiveness had been significantly limited.¹ The first and second rounds of another survey, conducted worldwide in May and July, respectively, by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, showed that national statistical offices in Africa were gradually recovering but were still facing several challenges, despite the active support that they had received from international organizations and partners.

5. Resilient strategies adopted by various countries to ensure the production of core statistics and business continuity during the COVID-19

¹ <https://www.uneca.org/publications/quick-assessment-impact-covid-19-pandemic-africa-national-statistical-offices>.



crisis significantly contributed to the gradual recovery observed among national statistical offices in July. The strategies have included making arrangements for staff teleworking and making methodological adjustments to respond to data demands, including by using alternative and new data sources and by introducing or intensifying modes of data collection other than the usual face-to-face interviews.

6. During the COVID-19 crisis, national statistical offices, national statistical systems and partners have demonstrated that they can adapt in a crisis to adequately meet data demands, which is a key aspect of the transformation and modernization of official statistics. Those efforts need to be strengthened to accelerate the transformation and modernization of official statistics throughout the continent.

7. It is in that context that ECA, jointly with AfDB, the PARIS 21, the World Bank and the African Union Commission, and in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the European Union, and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, have organized the ninth meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development.

8. The ninth meeting of the Forum will be held on 14 December under the theme *“Harnessing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis to accelerate the transformation and modernization of national statistical systems in Africa”*.

B. Objectives

9. The overall objective of ninth meeting is to foster connections among countries, partners and institutions that support statistics, with a view to addressing the needs of national statistical systems in order to bring about their transformation and modernization, with a special focus on the COVID-19 crisis.

10. The specific objectives of the meeting are:

(a) To take stock of the challenges faced by countries in addressing COVID-19-related issues and to identify the needs of national statistical systems with regard to their transformation and modernization;

(b) To take stock of the opportunities and mechanisms offered by pan-African institutions, partners and organizations to assist countries in responding to the COVID-19 crisis, and to support countries in their statistical development.

C. Expected outcomes

11. The expected outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

(a) Countries will gain greater awareness of the opportunities and mechanisms offered by pan-African institutions and partners to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and in support of the transformation and modernization of official statistics;

(b) Pan-African institutions and partners will gain a deeper understanding of needs of African countries;

(c) Interventions in support of African statistical development efforts will increase in number and be better coordinated.

D. Venue and date

12. The meeting is scheduled to be held online on 14 December from 1.00–3.30 p.m. Addis Ababa time (10.00 a.m.–12.30 p.m. GMT).

E. Format

13. The Forum will include presentations and discussions focusing on the following topics:

(a) *Challenges and needs of national statistical systems*: This topic will include presentations on the problems and needs of countries with regard to the COVID-19 crisis, and more generally on the transformation and modernizations of national statistical systems.

(b) *Contributions to statistical development in African countries*: This topic will be devoted to presentations by pan-African institutions and bilateral and multilateral partners of their plans, strategies and initiatives to support statistical development in Africa and to assist countries in responding to the impact that the COVID-19 crisis has had on national statistical systems.

(c) *Efficiency of partners' support*: This topic will deal with coordination and reporting in respect of the statistical support provided to African countries.

14. Owing to the constraints associated with online meetings, in particular the limited time allocated for sessions and discussions, a specific market fair webpage will be created to allow participating institutions to present and share information on their programmes, principally through posters, booklets, documentation, videos, and advertisement material.

F. Target audience

15. The target audience comprises all organizations and institutions working in the area of statistics in Africa.

G. Secretariat and other services

16. As the secretariat of the Forum, ECA will provide support for the meeting.

H. Contact information

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