

# 6<sup>TH</sup> SDMX GLOBAL CONFERENCE

SDMX FOR THE DATA REVOLUTION

DAY THREE

2-5 OCTOBER 2017



Photo by: Dayan Berhe

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## FAREWELL

A message from **Oliver Chinganya**,  
Director African Centre for Statistics (ACS)

It has been a fantastic and exciting 4-days SDMX Global Conference, full of illuminating presentations and engaging discussions. The SDMX conference would not have come to Africa at a better time than now when readily available data and information is much needed than ever before to inform decision processes in order to improve the lives of people of Africa. Policy makers are in need of coherent information now and not yesterday, and SDMX as tool for harmonizing and transmitting in real time is the answer. **The onus is therefore for you who have attended the conference to be “ambassadors” in advocating and promoting the use of SDMX as a standard in the statistical production value chain.**

I am sure each one of you is going home with added knowledge from some of the topics the conference discussed, namely, global data sharing, data validation, applying SDMX to improve statistical business processes, SDMX infrastructure and tools, and SDMX and global standardization. You might not be able to apply the knowledge in all the areas but at least in some. Yes, the challenges will be there but they are not insurmountable, a solution can always be found if the will to make a difference is there. Going forward, at the ECA we will continue to closely work with all statistical agencies, and will seek to support them to embrace innovative methods and tools in statistical data production as well as adopting SDMX as a primary tool for data exchange. We are also committed to closely working with the sponsor organizations including the African De-

velopment Bank (AfDB) to assist African countries in improving their statistical systems in order for them to produce data that are fit for purpose.

Looking ahead as we head for the next SDMX Global Conference in 2019 which will be held in one of the capitals of Latin America, it is imperative that SDMX implementation action plans are put in place as well as mainstreamed in the national strategy for development of statistics to ensure a coordinated approach of implementation. The action plan should include sustained capacity building, which will be supported by the sponsor organizations working very closely with ECA and AfDB. The sponsor organizations have pledged to coordinate their support to countries which will be tailored in line with the level of the statistical development of a country. In order to assure sustainability, ownership will be critical – buy-in on the use and the benefits of SDMX will be required at all levels of operation including among policy makers.

Finally, let me thank the sponsor organizations for the stewardship of the SDMX process, the Africa Development Bank for supporting the participation of a number of conference participants and to all of you for attending and for the splendid and rich interventions. I also want to thank the key note speaker Mr. Pali Lehohla, Statistician General for South Africa for the invoking thoughts and setting the tone for the conference. I want to thank the ECA team (ACS, Communication, Printing, Protocol, Security, Transport) that worked tirelessly individually and collectively to make the 6th SDMX Global Conference a success. It was indeed a demonstration of one UN. Keep up the good work.

*I wish you safe travel as you return to your respective capitals.*

# INTERVIEWS

by Sandra Nyaira



**Heinrich Ehrmann**  
Head of SIS at Bank  
for International  
Settlements (BIS)

We have our own self interests as an institution in fostering the standard and making sure it grows and is used by a wider community for the simple reason that we are the main beneficiary of a standardized way of exchanging data, reporting data. It makes our lives so much easier so we are more than happy to invest also in this initiative to sponsor the work; sponsor the tools that people need and sponsor the capacity building activities because we are also the beneficiaries, it's not just our constituency, we ourselves benefit greatly from this standard.

We would like to see further capacity building after this global conference that will ensure that more countries are able to use the standard because once you have the capacity, once you know how to do it, you can use it for any sector - you can use it for social statistics, financial statistics, economic statistics. We should also keep an eye on the tools as they become freely available and they are known to the community so at least they don't have to invest anything in license or software costs.



**Abdulla Gozalov**  
Chief, Global Data Ser-  
vices Union, United Na-  
tions Statistics Division,  
Department of Economic  
and Social Affairs

Abdulla Gozalov, Chief, Global Data Services Union, United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The SDMX Global Conference is a very important event we have the various stakeholders together. It is very encouraging to see that there are more than 90 countries participating in this conference, which we didn't see a few years ago, meaning progress is being made. We have heard a lot more examples of what is happening in different countries in implementing SDMX, which is very encouraging.

It is safe to say that adoption of SDMX is growing, there's increasing interest and willingness to invest in SDMX and standardize and modernize the mechanisms and processes for the exchange of statistical data and metadata. We have also heard a lot about the Africa Information Highway which is being used by the IMF and the African Development Bank in several African countries. Also the fact that SDMX is being held in Africa for the first time is an indication that SDMX has gone truly globally and it's also important for this technology because it has to go global to be successful.

## HISTORY OF THE SDMX GLOBAL CONFERENCE

by Molla Asmare

Source: SDMX.ORG

The 6th Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) Global Conference marks the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the Conference. It gathered together experts and managers from 92 countries, including an unprecedented 49 African countries.

- 1st** ● The first Conference was held in Washington D.C., USA, in January 2007 and was hosted by the World Bank under the theme "Towards Implementation of SDMX".
- 2nd** ● The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) hosted the 2nd Global Conference under the theme; "Towards building and SDMX community" in Paris, France, in 2009. Only a handful of African countries - Algeria, Congo, Tanzania, Madagascar, Niger, Togo and Tunisia – attended.
- 3rd** ● The 3rd SDMX Global Conference moved back to Washington D.C. in May of 2011 and was again hosted by the World Bank, this time in partnership with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Conference focused on the business case for statistical managers.
- 4th** ● The 4th edition of the Conference went back to Paris in September 2013 under the theme; "The global SDMX implementation in modernizing official statistics".
- 5th** ● The most recent one was held in Bangkok, Thailand, and was held from 28 to 30 September, 2015, at United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) under theme "SDMX in Action".

SDMX is an international initiative that aims at standardizing and modernizing or industrializing the mechanisms and processes for the exchange of statistical data and metadata among international organizations and their member countries.

It is sponsored by seven international organizations, including the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the European Central Bank (ECB), Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union), the IMF, the OECD, the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), and the World Bank.

These organizations are the main players at world and regional levels in the collection of official statistics in a large variety of domains, including agriculture statistics, economic and financial statistics, social statistics and environment statistics.



## GLOBAL CONFERENCE OFFERS GREAT SDMX CAPACITY BUILDING FOR BOTH TECHNICAL AND CONTENT TRACKS

by Xuan Che and Sandra Nyaira

As the old adage goes, all good things come to an end. After a busy four days, the 6th Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) global conference is coming to an end today.

**On Day 3 and 4 of the global conference, discussions moved on to the capacity building stage of SDMX for its hundreds of participants.**

The morning plenary session provided an overview of the full structure and infrastructure of SDMX. As the conference provides a rare and invaluable opportunity to gather all the SDMX sponsoring organizations and representatives from many national statistical offices together, these two full capacity building days will go a long way into enhancing the countries' capabilities and future for implementing SDMX.

In the technical track in the afternoon, various IT tools to utilize and implement SDMX standards and technical specifications, regarding data and metadata, including Reference Infrastructure SDMX-RI, were explained in full detail.

In the content track, the basic statistical ideas, including code lists, DSDs, concepts, and attributes, etc. were introduced. The track also explored the SDMX Starter Kit. For countries and organizations wishing to develop a business case for their higher managements' buy-in to SDMX, the Starter Kit provides a perfect tool for the initial leap, especially for countries with limited resources.

The SDMX checklist also painted a road map for the business procedure for implementing SDMX from scratch.

The discussion continues today, the last day of the conference, with topics focusing on various areas such as innovative ideas for national practices, data visualizations, and the bright look ahead of SDMX.

### IMF COLLABORATION

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Statistics Director, Louis Marc Ducharme, says he was impressed by the call by the Economic Commission for Africa's Deputy Executive Secretary, Giovane Biha, challenging the sponsor organizations to work with the ECA and others in assisting African countries improve their statistical systems in order for them to produce data that are fit for purpose.

"It is a great challenge that we will definitely take up to see how we can increase the uptake of SDMX on the African continent," said Mr. Ducharme, adding it is clear that Africa is thirsty for having more transparent and timely data.

Sheila S. Mudenda, Assistant Director, Information, Research and Dissemination Division in Zambia's Central Statistical Office also National e-GDDS Coordinator, says her team is excited with the experience they have had over the past three days.

**"We have been speaking with our colleagues from other African countries and we are all agreed that the experience over the past few days has been invaluable," said Ms. Mudenda, adding they go back to their respective countries better-equipped and more knowledgeable about SDMX.**

Coleman Dube of Statistics South Africa says he was excited to learn about SDMX. He says as a person working for an office that prides itself as a 'preferred supplier of quality statistics', he had gained a lot that will help contribute towards that motto. ■

*To view and download presentations on capacity building presented on the 4th and 5th of October, 2017 please visit [bit.ly/sdmx2017cb](http://bit.ly/sdmx2017cb)*

# THE CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

Photo contributions by: Xuan Che, Yonathan Tadesse  
and Amdeberhan Getachew

