

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

## SDMX FOR THE DATA REVOLUTION

### DAY ONE 2-5 OCTOBER 2017



**Dear participants, welcome.**

The conference is the first ever in Africa. The decision by the Sponsor Organizations to bring the conference to Africa is recognition that it cannot be left out of the SDMX initiative as a primal informer of a connected world. As ECA we are therefore delighted to host this important event which brings over 300 statisticians and data enthusiasts from 92 countries from all corners of the world. SDMX is a tool which all countries should embrace because of its potential uses and benefits. As someone said, “unlike the traditional way of preaching where only the priest has a bible and yet not a single member of congregation has a bible; SDMX allows both the priest and the congregation to have access to a bible and all of them reading the same verse”. This means the data can no longer be a preserve of one institution and its principals. It is therefore my hope that the conference will make a case of its benefits in improving consistency, quality and timeliness as well as discuss mechanisms of developing capacity in developing countries in order to adopt and use SDMX. I expect the SDMX to be a game changer as part of the data revolution that will contribute to the acceleration of Africa’s economic transformation agenda and “true” integration to the global initiative.

— **Oliver Chinganya**, Director  
African Centre for Statistics (ACS).

## BIHA OFFICIALLY OPENS SDMX CONFERENCE

Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange conference kicks off in Addis Ababa.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DAY

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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2, 2017 (ECA)** - The 6th Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) conference opened in Addis Ababa Monday with Deputy Executive Secretary, Giovannie Biha, of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) stressing that African countries can no longer afford to continue traditional ways of processing and disseminating statistics.

In opening remarks to the conference bringing together over 300 experts from National Statistical Offices, Central Banks, other government institutions, international agencies, and the private sector from all parts of the world, Ms. Biha said the continent would fail if it continued to process and disseminate statistics in the old way.

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*Biha official opens SDMX conference, continued from pg. 1*

**“It is not sustainable to continue business as usual. Innovation like SDMX has to be embraced to save resources, increase efficiency, minimize response burden on countries, as well as to improve quality,” she said.**

Ms. Biha said in the era of sustainable development goals (SDGs), statistical data and metadata were now more important than ever.

However, with so many data producers and consumers in the government, private sector, and civil society, maintaining consistency and coherence of the data was a real challenge, she noted.

**“This is where SDMX can make a real difference by bringing a common understanding of the data and providing a way to supply robust metadata that can explain discrepancies. This will ensure use of credible data that is accepted by all users at all levels,”** the Deputy Executive Secretary said.

She said the theme of the conference; “Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange for the Data Revolution” was timely as Africa accelerates its economic transformation agenda.

Ms. Biha said the sustainable development agenda calls for a data revolution to improve quality and timeliness of data to support development agendas at all levels.

**“This necessitates a strong and sustainable statistical system to provide data required at all levels of government, private sector, and society. More importantly, the data should be of good quality to accurately prioritize competing development areas, monitor plans and evaluate outcomes and identify alternatives.”**

She said the ECA, through its African Centre for Statistics, will seek to support its Member States to embrace innovative methods and tools in statistical data production as well as adopting SDMX as primary tool for data exchange.

Ms. Biha said the choice of Africa to host the SDMX conference for the first time, demonstrates to a large extent both the recognition of the active role that developing countries play in the world statistical landscape, as well as the strides being made in bridging the digital divide. ■

## INTERVIEWS

by Sandra Nyaira

At the end of the first day of the 6th SDMX conference, we reached out to some of the participants for their take on Day 1 of the meeting and why SDMX is important.



**Marta Nagy-Rothengass**

Head of Data and Metadata Services and Standards Unit at Eurostat and Chair of the SDMX Sponsors Secretariat

It is heartening that we managed to bring together more than 90 countries to attend this conference and if we harmonize or standardize our data, formats, architecture and data exchange, we can deliver better statistics for less money. It's important that we are more effective and more efficient as statistics support decision-making processes across the board. This conference will help us all a lot.



**Alessandro Bonara**

Head of Statistical Information Services Division, European Central Bank

Our world is more and more interconnected now and our organization works well if we are part of the world organizations. This web is facilitated by the users of SDMX and by the ability to fluidly transmit and process data. More and more data is required to measure the reality and understand risks etc and one institution cannot do it alone – SDMX is the glue. We want to see SDMX becoming the glue worldwide.

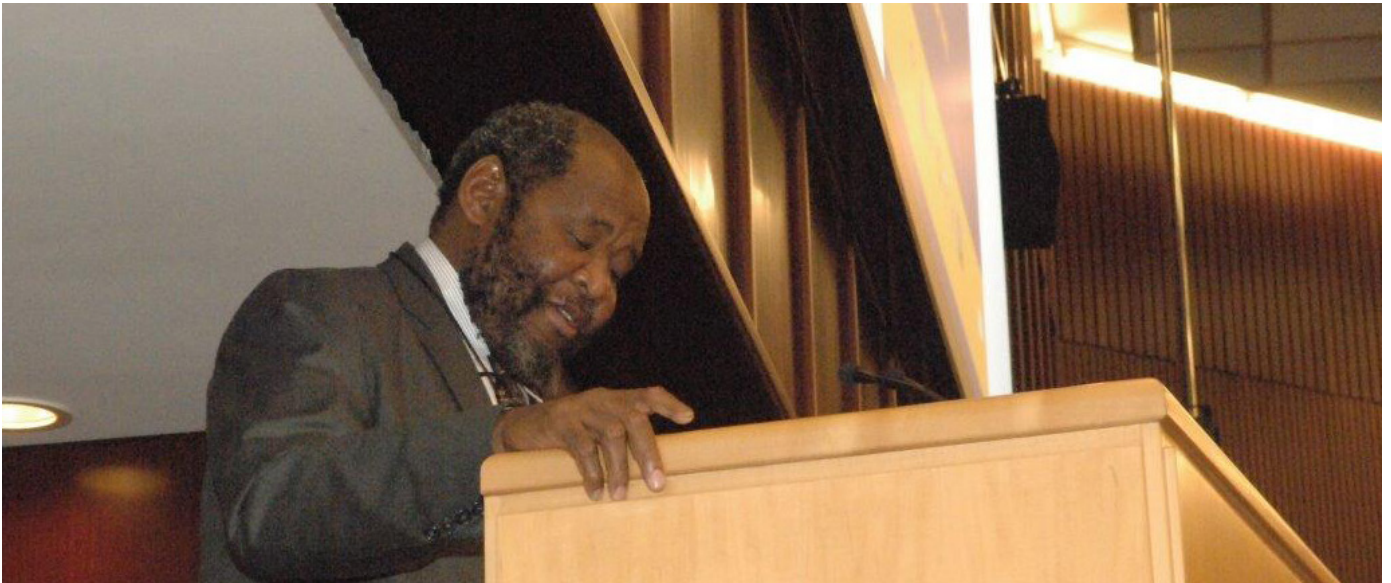


**Sheila S. Mudenda**

Assistant Director, Information, Research and Dissemination Division in Zambia's Central Statistical Office also National e-GDDS Coordinator

Today I have learnt that SDMX can be used throughout the different processes of producing official statistics. I'm finding that worth listening to and would like to hear and learn more about that since we have been using it mainly for dissemination. We are rolling out our national strategy for the development statistics (2014-2018) and I have no doubt that our team here will learn a lot that will help us reorganize our office and enhance our CSO to produce quality data and disseminate using SDMX.





## TIME TO LEGISLATE STATISTICS SAYS SOUTH AFRICA'S STATISTICIAN-GENERAL LEHOHLA AT SDMX CONFERENCE

by Sandra Nyaira

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2, 2017 (ECA)** – Statistics make a crucial contribution to good governance in modern democracy, assisting in the formulation and evaluation of policies, among others, hence safeguards should be put in place to protect statisticians, South Africa's Statistician-General, Pali Lehohla, said Monday.

In a keynote address to the 6th Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) conference in Addis Ababa, Mr. Lehohla said statistics are part of the accountability framework, joining the judiciary, legislature and auditors general, amongst others, so "safeguards that protect statisticians in similar fashion as the judiciary are crucial conditions for performing the tasks of statistics".

Placing a statutory responsibility on statistics introduces direct reporting and accountability to parliaments, encouraging and informing debate and in the process ensuring high quality data is delivered.

Mr. Lehohla said the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals have imposed on statisticians the inevitable need to advance the global agenda even further following the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He said the responsibilities are enormous.

*"They suggest a new era for the development of statistics as an undisputed system of evidence - statistics as a fundamental conduit of trust - an interlocutor of discourse amongst families, communities and nations," Mr. Lehohla said.*

*"Indeed the most sought after currency for trade, discovery, travel and establishing the essence of humanity and its interconnectedness with planet in pursuit for peace and prosperity. Statistics is both the prime driver of the SDGs but also it constitutes the intrinsic value of the SDGs."*

He said the essence of the SDMX and its significant contribution to the statistical value chain need not be overemphasized.

"We need to be aware of the new challenges that lie ahead and those that are lurking below the surface in pursuit of the SDGs. We need to be vigilant and remain willing to learn and collaborate as we weave and feel our way through these difficult moments," added Mr. Lehohla.

He said the main challenge as the implementation of the SDMX continues is the question of confidentiality.

"Whilst major breakthroughs are made here through collaboration and memorandum of understanding, the e-generation cares less about confidentiality as they plough their trade in an open world where secrets have even become impossible to keep," said Mr. Lehohla.

The SDMX, he said, is a great enabler of this challenge and is a strong weapon and shields the nimble feet of the statistician who dances on the sharp end of the blade implementing the fundamental principles of official statistics. ■

# SDGS OFFER UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND SDMX REACH SAYS UNSD'S SCHWEINFEST

by Sandra Nyaira

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2, 2017 (ECA)** – The universality and cross-cutting nature of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offers a unique opportunity for international partners to expand the reach of SDMX beyond its geographical and substantive core.

This was said by Stefan Schweinfest, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, at the 6th Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) conference.

“Indeed, we have observed enormous interest in and are asked a lot about SDMX for SDGs,” he said, adding a working group has been established to develop SDMX standards for the SDGs and will conduct pilot data exchange early next year.

Mr. Schweinfest, who gave participants a brief history of how SDMX came into being, said interoperability was at the heart of SDMX.

“This standard is platform neutral, and indeed has proven to work very well across sometimes quite heterogeneous systems. Interoperability permits to use SDMX structures

in a variety of contexts to support data collection, dissemination, data hubs, and others,” he said.

SDMX tools, said Mr. Schweinfest, are available as open source, allowing users to easily extend and build on them.

“These technologies and tools can of course help streamline and automate data exchange at national level just as well as with international agencies – indeed great efficiencies can be achieved implementing data exchange between the various government agencies at the national level. These technologies create a potential to even take SDMX beyond statistics,” the UNSD Director said.

Mr. Schweinfest said at the heart of SDMX is the idea that partners can agree on a way to present and exchange statistical data and metadata in a standardized way.

“We have to be aware that by itself SDMX is not a wonder weapon, and will not, in a flash, enable all our systems to talk to each other,” he said.

“These structures require a lot of patient work to develop. But once completed, they are our common professional language, enabling anyone to express their data in a standard, uniform way and, indeed, make it possible for our systems to talk to each other and for the data to travel effectively from their production site to the multiple users, who need them, at the national and international level.”

Mr. Schweinfest applauded International Monetary Fund and African Development Bank efforts for helping industrialize SDMX exchange in Africa. ■

## THE FIRST DAY AT A GLANCE

