



**STATCOM-
AFRICA-VI**

**UN-GGIM:
AFRICA**



Message from
Oliver Chinganya

Director, African Center for Statistics

Dear participants,

The StatCom-Africa, which is a resemblance of the UN Statistical Commission (*an apex entity of the global statistical system and the highest decision making body for international statistical activities*) is, at the regional level, the highest gathering which brings together the African statistical fraternity as well as development partners supporting statistical development in Africa. It also attracts participation of Geoinformation experts and other data enthusiasts. As we are gathered here for the 6th round of this high level meeting, we take stock of the path taken and our endeavors in advancing African statistical capacity. Our continued and concerted efforts have proven crucial in further ameliorating the monitoring and reporting for indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals and the AU Agenda 2063, “The Africa we want”. During this journey undertaken along with other pan-African institutions, regional economic communities and regional statistical training centres, as well the national statistical offices, we have collaborated with development partners who have provided both technical and financial support. The continued collaboration and co-operation in building sustainable capacities of member States to concretely elevate the statistical production, analysis and dissemination of quality and credible data on the continent is yielding results, although much still remains to be done. The 6th StatCom-Africa session, takes recognition of new challenges that are posing danger to the credibility and quality of data and statistics for Africa as well as across the globe. By this I refer to the issues of misinformation, disinformation and manipulation of data and statistics. In attempting to resolve these challenges, member States are engaging fully in the various sessions as well as in side events to come up with innovative solutions. Better ways of responding to these challenges are critical – statisticians will have to think out of the box.

Without being self-serving, I would like to reiterate the fact that the more than 350 participants, and level of representation in this gathering is a resounding testimony that the topics identified for this round of StatCom-Africa resonate clearly with the aspirations of the member States and that the ECA is doing well in listening and responding to their needs. Going forward, I am of the strongest conviction that such focus and alignment with the core needs of the continent’s statistical development agenda translated into actionable programmatic interventions, would indeed result in getting us closer to our vision of really transforming Africa with credible data and statistics. The journey continues and the destination will only be defined by the type and nature of data being generated. Remember, not everything that counts count.



AFRICAN STATISTICIANS URGED TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF THEIR DATA AND USE IT FOR THE CONTINENT’S PROSPERITY

by Sandra Nyaira | photos by Antonio Fiorente

Addis Ababa, 3 October 2018 (ECA)—Statisticians were on Wednesday urged to do more to explain and sell their work to ensure their product helps African governments to make informed policies that can change communities and democracies for the better.

This was said by Vincent F. Hendricks, a Professor of Formal Philosophy at The University of Copenhagen, Denmark, in a captivating keynote address at the on-going Sixth Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa VI), which is being held under the theme; Enhancing the Capacity of National Statistical Systems to support policies for Africa’s economic diversification and industrialization.

He said in the era of fake news and populist politicians, statisticians should be aware of the threat to evidence-based policymaking.

“We as scientists do not like to sell ourselves or our product thinking that it will sell itself because its value is self-evident but it doesn’t work that way in the real world. In this world we live in today of fake news you have to realize that you are the experts and not the politicians; take ownership of your data and use it not only to change your communities but also your democracies,” he said as he warned the experts of the risk of digital totalitarianism.

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MEMBER STATES ENDORSE ECA'S STRATEGIC PLAN FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

by Ernest Cho Chi | photos by Wendwesen Tekle Temesgen

Addis Ababa, 3 October 2018 (ECA) —“Transforming Africa through credible data and statistics is something we take very seriously,” said Oliver Chinganya, Director of the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

He made the statement while presenting ACS’ proposed strategic framework for the 2018-2019 biennium at the 6th meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM) in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Chinganya reminded STATCOM delegates that ACS is structured to “improve the production, dissemination and use of quality data & statistics within the framework of Agenda 2030 and the African Union’s 2063 Agenda in order to support economic and social development in Africa.”

He noted that the Centre is embarked on strategic work areas, including the production of handbooks and guidelines; implementation of field projects; training; advocacy campaigns to address institutional issues and the design of national strategies on statistics; dissemination of information and best practices; provision of technical assistance; and resource mobilization.

The ECA director also stated that “particular emphasis will be placed on developing manuals for producing harmonized statistics and supporting the statistical working groups dealing with issues related to the harmonization of price statistics.”

The session, which was devoted to ‘ECA’s New Strategic Areas and Statistical Programme,’ was also an opportunity for representatives of African national statistics offices to be presented with synopses of five statutory reports and recommendations for their endorsement.

In his presentation of the “Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts in Africa,” Xiaoning Gong, Chief of Statistics at the ACS, said; “in the past two years, considerable effort and progress have been made by countries in the areas of the compilation, application and dissemination of national accounts.”

He implored STATCOM to evaluate the importance of environmental accounts with regard to sustainability, natural resource management, and environmental policy, and urge member states to prioritize environmental-economic accounts.

Fatouma Sissoko, an ACS Statistician who presented a report on the integrated regional indicator framework for Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, told participants that; “the Regional Indicator for SDGs and Agenda 2063 resulted to a list of 124 indicators with 63 core indicators from the first 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023) Agenda 2063 and 61 complementary indicators from the global list of indicators for the SDGs.”

A presentation on ‘Statistical Capacity Development in Africa’ was also made by ACS’ Chief of Statistical Development, Tinfissi Joseph Ilboudo, who pointed out that in order to implement Africa’s development agenda and the SDGs, statistics training centers must ensure that staff are equipped with the required statistical knowledge. He added, “legislation on statistics must also be aligned with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and the African Charter on Statistics.”

Synopses of two other reports on ‘Population and Housing Censuses’ and ‘Civil Registration and Vital Statistics’ were also presented by Ayenika Godheart Mbiydzenyuy, ECA Statistician, who urged STATCOM to review and endorse the conclusions and recommendations of the reports.

Mr. Chinganya told the group that ACS focuses “on areas where we have a comparative advantage and can add value.”

Under the leadership of the new STATCOM chairperson, Albina Chuwa from Tanzania, the delegates reviewed, discussed, and endorsed the proposed framework. ■





GROWING INTEREST OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES IN UN-GGIM INITIATIVE APPLAUDED

by Sandra Nyaira | photos by Wendwesen Tekle Temesgen

Addis Ababa, 3 October 2018 (ECA) — The Regional Committee of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management in Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa) opened its fourth session Wednesday with participants applauding the growing interest of African countries in the UN-GGIM initiative.

Participants focused on the need to foster Member States' participation in the UN-GGIM at national, regional and global levels; aligning and prioritizing of the regions work programme with that at the global level and also in line with the UN global agenda.

They also discussed Africa's participation in the work of various Expert and Working Groups and defining the means of implementation of activities outlined in the Action Plan of UN-GGIM: Africa; the need to engage the Working Groups to effectively develop activities on the ground; and how to make effective the governance and functional mechanisms for the management of UN-GGIM: Africa with a clear strategy for resource mobilization.

In the opening session, which was chaired by Mr. Greg Scott, Chief of the UN-GGIM Secretariat in New York, Mr. Sultan Mohammed Alya of Ethiopia, current Chair of the Executive Bureau of UN-GGIM: Africa, said meeting outcomes will encourage every UN Member State in Africa to fulfil their responsibilities and contribute towards the global UN-GGIM vision.

"It is important that there is a growing interest of African countries to the UN-GGIM initiative," he said, adding the foundation had been laid for strengthening the capacity of African countries to leverage the existing capabilities of geospatial information technology to foster sustainable development on the continent.

Mr. Andre Nonguierma, Chief of the Geoinformation and Sectoral Statistics Section at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), underscored that to progress geospatial information and ensure that it is benefiting Africans at every level and contributing to the global perspective, cohesive and coordinated efforts were required from Member States.

Mr. Nonguierma said the ECA had left no stone unturned in ensuring the meeting was a success so Africa could continue to deliver its remit to the global effort.

The meeting received two goodwill messages as follows from the UN-GGIM Secretariat and the African Union Commission (AUC) commending UN-GGIM: Africa for its contribution to the global UN-GGIM effort.

Mr. Tidiane Ouattara of the AUC stressed the need for the necessary linkages between UN-GGIM: Africa and the recently launched Africa Space Policy and its operational programme, GMES-Africa. He said the AUC fully supports the initiative.

Meeting outcomes will help consolidate consensus and drive political will in leveraging the enabling capabilities of geospatial information technology to meet the African development agenda.

Mr. Alya noted that his Executive Bureau had achieved much, including active participation and contribution to the global UN-GGIM activities and events; ensuring Africa's voice was heard in the global arena of geospatial information management as well as strengthening UN-GGIM: Africa interaction with public/private organizations, institutions and individuals involved in the development of geospatial information to effectively support the African geospatial community by raising awareness, funds and learning from the experience of other regions.

REVAMPING THE UN-GGIM: AFRICA GOVERNANCE

The meeting also discussed and reached a consensus to renew the UN-GGIM: Africa Executive Bureau and the membership of the Working Groups. The following countries are in the new bureau:

- » **Chair:** Senegal
- » **1st Vice-Chair:** Botswana
- » **2nd Vice-Chair:** Algeria
- » **1st Rapporteur:** Cameroon
- » **2nd Rapporteur:** Uganda

The ECA continues as the Secretariat of UN-GGIM: Africa.

The meeting also discussed and agreed on the membership and composition of the Working Groups. New chairs for all working were elected as follow;

- » **WG1:** African Geodetic Reference Frame is chaired by Kenya;
- » **WG2:** Fundamental Geospatial datasets and Standards South Africa;
- » **WG3:** Institutional arrangements and Legal frameworks Algeria;
- » **WG4:** Capacity and capability development Nigeria;
- » **WG5:** Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Information for Sectoral Applications South Sudan.

Technical presentations on geospatial information management in Africa were also delivered.

THE 3RD DAY AT A GLANCE

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Mr. Hendricks, who's the Director of the Center for Information and Bubble Studies, said statistics would lose the battle of ideas if data producers did not go out there to sell it, adding statisticians should not only generate data but use it for the good of their communities.

"Say what it is that you do and why is it important. Put pressure on politicians and governments by showing them the hard evidence as to why it matters; put things into perspective. If you are not the ones who put a very high bar on this issue then it is not going to be done," he said.

"You are the ones informing democracy; you are the ones who are making sure that evidence-backed policy is not just a mystery. That is what you do. If you do not go out say it accordingly, you are going to lose that authority in this attention game and when you lose, your states lose and your populations lose. So put the bar really high and do not be afraid to get out there as long as you are truthful with the information but if you start doctoring it you lose your authority in seconds."

Mr. Hendricks added the experts needed to do more to push their governments to fund statistical development on the continent.

"Correct information and democracy are tied together very very intimately. That's the reason why you are in statistical agencies so you can do evidence-based policy making. That's the very reason you are here. Never forget because without correct information democracies don't run - they are particularly sensitive to misinformation as you have seen in the U.S., France, Italy and others," Mr. Hendricks added.

At the end of the keynote address, Mr. Hendricks launched his new book, REALITY LOST, which he co-authored with Mads Vestergaard.

REALITY LOST: Markets of Attention, Misinformation and Manipulation is an analysis by the two philosophers of the nuts and bolts of the information market, the attention economy and media eco-system which may pave way to post-factual democracy. Here misleading narratives become the basis for political opinion formation, debate, and legislation. To curb this development and the threat it poses to democratic deliberation, political self-determination and freedom, it is necessary that we first grasp the mechanisms and structural conditions that causes it, posit the two.

A democracy is in a post-factual state when opportune political narratives but factually incorrect information replace facts and evidence as basis for political debate, opinion formation and policymaking, Hendricks and Vestergaard agree in the book.

The media is being flooded by populist narratives, fake news, conspiracy theories and make-believe, they say in the book. "Misinformation is turning into a challenge for all of us, whether politicians, journalists, or citizens. In the age of information, attention is a prime asset and may be converted into money, power, and influence – sometimes at the cost of facts."

"The point is to obtain exposure on the air and in print media, and to generate traffic on social media platforms. With information in abundance and attention scarce, the competition is ever fiercer with truth all too often becoming the first victim."

Heads of National Statistics Offices, representatives from national, sub-regional, regional and international organizations, inter-governmental organizations, NGOs, the academia and research institutions and the private sector are attending the four-day meeting. ■

INTERVIEWS

by Ernest Cho Chi | photo par Antonio Fiorente



Albine A. Chuwa
Chair of STATCOM and
Director-General, Tanzania
National Bureau of
Statistics

As the new chairperson of STATCOM, my vision is really to support Agenda 2063; the Africa we want. We need good statistics and data to inform our policymakers and heads of state on how best to attain the objectives of Agenda 2063. The task now is to promote the culture of evidence-based statistics in Africa. This can only be done in partnership with the heads of our various national statistical offices.

My plea is for our leaders to view statistics as an essential element, the same way they view water and electricity. We should stop relying on development partners to provide funds for our statistics. We have to be a bit more serious about this. If I had the chance to sit in one of those meetings of heads of state, that's exactly what I'd be telling them. I'll let them know that to get to the 'Africa We Want,' we need to put more emphasis and resources to produce our statistics and data. We are tired of begging for money from outside Africa



Kadidia Souley Yero
Data Scientist, Niger

I work with an organization in Niger that uses a lot of earth satellite observation data. I'm here not necessarily to represent my country but as a data scientist, given the importance of geospatial in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I strongly believe that the integration of geospatial and statistical skills, data and resources will enhance our understanding of the needs of our rural populations and our countries such that we can address properly and sustainably. Working together as a collective will enhance our ability to generate better statistics and data to enable our policymakers to make good decisions in support of the SDGs.



Sorel Francine Kouam
Statistical Engineer,
Cameroon Ministry of
Agriculture

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is doing a very good job of promoting statistical development in across Africa. They are conducting many trainings on statistics, targeting both national statistics offices and schools of statistics. They also organize workshops to train trainers. I particularly appreciate their support for Agricultural statistics.

I came here to attend the AGROST meeting. I recently benefited from an ECA scholarship for a master's programme on agricultural statistics. The programme is over now so I thought it was important for me to participant in such an important event. As a statistical engineer in Cameroon's Ministry of Agriculture, I view STATCOM as a unique opportunity to hear reports on statistical development in other African countries.



LES STATISTICIENS AFRICAINS PRIÉS DE S'APPROPRIER LEURS DONNÉES ET DE LES UTILISER POUR LA PROSPÉRITÉ DU CONTINENT *par Sandra Nyaira | photo par Antonio Fiorente*

Addis-Abeba, Éthiopie, le 3 octobre 2018 (CEA) — Les statisticiens ont été invités ce mercredi, à faire davantage pour éclairer et vendre leur travail afin que leurs produits aident les gouvernements africains à élaborer des politiques informées susceptibles de changer les communautés et les démocraties pour le mieux.

Vincent F. Hendricks, Professeur de philosophie formelle à l'Université de Copenhague (Danemark), déclare dans un discours captivant prononcé devant la Sixième Commission de la statistique pour l'Afrique (StatCom-Africa VI), qui se déroule actuellement et qui a pour thème, « Renforcement de la capacité des systèmes statistiques nationaux à l'appui des politiques de diversification économique et d'industrialisation de l'Afrique ».

Il indique qu'à l'ère des fausses informations et des politiciens populistes, les statisticiens doivent être conscients de la menace qui pèse sur les décisions politiques.

« En tant que scientifiques, nous n'aimons pas nous vendre ou vendre notre produit en pensant qu'il se vendra lui-même parce que sa valeur est évidente, mais cela ne fonctionne pas ainsi dans le monde réel. Dans ce monde de fausses nouvelles où nous vivons aujourd'hui, vous devez réaliser que vous êtes les experts et non les politiciens ; prenez vos données en main et utilisez-les non seulement pour changer vos communautés, mais aussi vos démocraties », indique-t-il, en mettant en garde les experts contre le risque du totalitarisme numérique.

M. Hendricks, Directeur du Centre pour les informations et les études sur les bulles, informe que les statistiques perdraient la bataille des idées si les producteurs de données ne les vendaient pas, ajoutant que les statisticiens devraient non seulement générer des données, mais aussi les utiliser pour le bien de leurs communautés.

« Dites ce que vous faites et pourquoi c'est important. Faites pression sur les politiciens et les gouvernements en leur montrant les preuves tangibles de leur importance ; mettez les choses en perspective. Si ce n'est pas vous qui placez la barre très haut sur cette question, cela ne sera pas fait », fait-il savoir.

« Vous êtes ceux qui informez la démocratie ; vous êtes ceux qui veillez à ce que la politique factuelle ne soit pas un mystère. C'est ce que vous faites. Si vous ne l'exposez pas, en conséquence, vous perdrez cette autorité dans cet intérêt et lorsque vous perdez, vos États perdent et vos populations perdent. Alors placez la barre très haut et n'ayez pas peur de vous exposer aussi longtemps que vous garantissez la véracité des informations, mais si vous commencez à les falsifier, vous perdez votre autorité en un temps record ».

M. Hendricks ajoute que les experts doivent faire davantage pour pousser leurs gouvernements à financer le développement des statistiques sur le continent.

« L'information correcte et la démocratie sont intimement liées. C'est la raison pour laquelle vous travaillez dans des agences de statistique pour pouvoir élaborer des politiques fondées sur des données factuelles. C'est la raison même pour laquelle vous êtes ici. N'oubliez jamais que, sans informations correctes, les démocraties ne fonctionnent pas - elles sont particulièrement sensibles à la désinformation, comme vous l'avez constaté aux États-Unis, en France, en Italie et ailleurs », ne manque pas d'ajouter M. Hendricks.

À la fin du discours liminaire, M. Hendricks a lancé son nouvel ouvrage, *REALITY LOST*, dont il est le co-auteur avec Mads Vestergaard.

REALITY LOST: Markets of Attention, Misinformation and Manipulation, (*UNE RÉALITÉ PERDUE : Les marchés de l'attention, de la désinformation et de la manipulation*) est une analyse par les deux philosophes des rouages du marché de l'information, de l'économie de l'attention et de l'écosystème des médias qui pourraient ouvrir la voie à une démocratie post-factuelle. Ici, les récits trompeurs deviennent la base de la formation de l'opinion politique, du débat et de la législation. Pour freiner ce développement et la menace qu'il fait peser sur la délibération démocratique, l'autodétermination politique et la liberté, il est nécessaire d'abord de saisir les mécanismes et les conditions structurelles qui les provoquent.

Une démocratie est dans un état post-factuel lorsque des récits politiques opportuns mais des informations factuelles incorrectes remplacent les faits et les éléments de preuve comme base du débat politique, de la formation de l'opinion et de la formulation des politiques, avouent Hendricks et Vestergaard dans le livre.

Les médias sont en train d'être inondés de récits populistes, de fausses informations, de théories du complot et de faux semblants, disent-ils dans le livre. « La désinformation est en train de devenir un défi pour nous tous, hommes politiques, journalistes ou citoyens. À l'ère de l'information, l'attention est un atout primordial et peut être convertie en argent, en pouvoir et en influence, parfois au détriment des faits ».

« L'important est d'obtenir une visibilité sur les ondes et dans les médias imprimés, ainsi que de générer une affluence sur les plateformes de médias sociaux. Avec des informations abondantes et une attention rare, la concurrence est de plus en plus féroce, la vérité devenant trop souvent la première victime ».

Les chefs des Bureaux nationaux de statistique, des représentants d'organisations nationales, sous-régionales, régionales et internationales, d'organisations intergouvernementales, d'ONG, du monde universitaire et d'instituts de recherche et du secteur privé assistent à la réunion.

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