



Economic Commission for Africa
Statistical Commission for Africa
Seventh meeting
Addis Ababa (online), 13–15 October 2020

Concept note

I. Introduction and rationale

1. The seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa will be held under the theme, “Developing regional solutions to enhance the resilience of African national statistical systems to meet the need for data during the Decade of Action in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic”. The meeting is being organized amid the call of the Eval4Action campaign for all actors everywhere to accelerate delivery on the Sustainable Development Goals, by advocating for the development of stronger evaluation capacity and evidence-based policies. With only 10 years left to achieve the Goals, the Secretary-General has asked everyone to mobilize in an ambitious and urgent manner to deliver on the Goals by 2030. That appeal has been echoed in the United Nations Data Strategy for Action by Everyone, Everywhere, which was announced in April 2020.

2. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already severe challenge of collecting, producing and disseminating economic, social and environmental statistics to inform the development of policies to achieve the goals of various global, regional and subregional agendas. To mitigate the impact of the pandemic in Africa, several initiatives have been taken by United Nations agencies, through opportunity/issue-based coalitions, with a view to improving coordination of statistical support, efficiently using the scarce resources allocated for the development of statistics by the United Nations regional data hub, and ensuring the continuous availability of data for measuring progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, African countries remain committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the aspirations for regional integration under Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want in particular, as manifest in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

4. For statisticians, the present time of crisis requires innovative and pragmatic statistical solutions to meet the need for timely, reliable and high-quality data.

5. A recent assessment of the statistical activities of African national statistical offices highlighted the following major impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic:

a) Data collection operations have been significantly hampered. Twenty-five per cent of surveys that had been planned (i.e., 42 of 168) have been either halted or suspended, and a further 48 surveys have been postponed;



b) Even where operations are ongoing, higher non-responses rates and low sample coverage have been observed. Furthermore, 22 per cent of planned population and housing census activities have been either halted or suspended;

c) There has been greater demand for data and supporting activities. National statistical systems, in particular national statistical offices, have been overwhelmed by requests for data, statistical services and information.

6. In the light of the aforementioned impacts, it is essential to find adequate solutions to the challenges arising from the pandemic and to fast-track the implementation of programmes to achieve global and regional agendas.

7. Given the extent to which the expansion of the COVID-19 pandemic has marked every aspect of socioeconomic development, the meeting will highlight the key challenges faced while implementing statistical programmes and operations in this context, along with measures for effectively dealing with those challenges.

II. Objective

8. The overarching objective of the meeting will be to devise innovative statistical solutions to strengthen national statistical systems with a view to keeping decision-makers informed of economic, social and environmental developments in real time.

III. Expected accomplishments

9. As a subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Statistical Commission for Africa will provide guidance for ECA statistical programmes in fulfilling the requirements for statistical data engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic.

10. The expected accomplishments of the meeting are as follows:

a) **Ownership of methodologies:** African statistical system actors will discuss how to adapt to local conditions methodologies that have been developed at the global level (in particular those discussed during recent sessions of the United Nations Statistical Commission) and will adopt regional positions on some matters;

b) **Harmonization of methodologies:** Effective guidance will be given on statistical concepts, methods and standards to support governments and regional institutions in the production, use and dissemination of high-quality statistics in support of development efforts;

c) **COVID-19 pandemic impact mitigation:** Appropriate methodologies to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be identified;

d) **Greater knowledge of partnership opportunities:** Partners will share with participants their respective initiatives to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals during the present Decade of Action.

IV. Format

11. Owing to the global context marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting will be conducted online. A link to gain access to the meeting will be communicated to participants in due course.

V. Date and time

12. The meeting will be held from 13 to 15 October 2020, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (Addis Ababa time).

VI. Languages

13. The meeting will consist of plenary sessions, at which simultaneous interpretation in English and French will be provided.

VII. Participants

14. The official country delegation to the meeting should normally be led by the head of the national statistical office. Given the objective of the meeting, representatives of agricultural statistical systems, health statistical systems, education statistical systems, civil registration systems and statistical training centres will be invited.

15. Observers from national, subregional, regional and international organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and research institutions, the private sector and related industries will also be invited. Observers may attend all sessions, except those designated as private, and participate in discussions, but may not vote on any issues.

VIII. Contact information

16. For further information, please contact:

Mr. Joseph Tinfissi Ilboudo	Mr. Oumar Sarr
Chief, Statistical Development, Data Innovation and Outreach Section	Statistician
African Centre for Statistics	African Centre for Statistics
Economic Commission for Africa	Economic Commission for Africa
Tel: (251) 115 445533 WhatsApp: +251 924163430	Tel: (251) 115 443614 WhatsApp: +251 911550021
E-mail: ilboudo@un.org	E-mail: sarro@un.org