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Committee of Experts**
Thirty-sixth meeting

**African Union
Committee of Experts**
Third meeting

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Report on the second joint session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Committee on Statistics

I. Introduction

1. The second joint session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Committee on Statistics,¹ comprising the fifth session of the Committee on Statistics and the tenth meeting of the African Union Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices was held in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, from 30 November to 2 December 2016. The theme of the joint session was "Strengthening economic statistics to support Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", chosen to highlight the role of economic statistics in the work to develop a framework for the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of efforts to attain the Sustainable Development Goals and to meet the targets of Agenda 2063. Participants at the joint session also reviewed the status of implementation of the various specialized groups under the Strategy for Harmonization of Statistics in Africa.
2. The second session of the Regional Committee for Africa of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Africa) was also held in parallel, at the same venue.
3. The joint session was preceded by the following events, held on 28 and 29 November 2016:

* E/ECA/COE/36/1-AU/STC/FMEPI/EXP/1(III)

¹ Formerly known as the "Statistical Commission for Africa".

- (a) Forum on African Statistical Development;
- (b) Meeting of the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources;
- (c) Meeting of the specialized technical group on governance, peace and security statistics;
- (d) Expert group meeting on land policy in Africa;
- (e) Presentation on health statistics and the campaign to end child marriage;
- (f) Meeting of the advisory group on the Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Community;
- (g) Presentation on data-sharing within the framework of the joint African Statistical Yearbook;
- (h) Presentation on the integration of geospatial and statistical information;
- (i) Presentation on the African Gender and Development Index and on international and joint-agency women's and girls' initiatives.

II. Objective of the joint session

4. The primary objective was to discuss the status of economic statistics in Africa and challenges encountered in their production, and to take stock of the efforts made to upgrade official statistics in the continent in support of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

III. Attendance

5. The joint session was attended by representatives of the following ECA member States: Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

6. Representatives of the following United Nations and intergovernmental organizations also attended: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Union Commission, African Development Bank, East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Maghreb Arab Union, Economic and Statistical Observatory of Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT) and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

7. The joint session was also attended by observers from the following organizations:

(a) Statistical training centres: Institut de formation et de recherche démographiques (Institute for Training and Demographic Research – IFORD); Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC); École nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie appliquée (National Higher School of Statistics and Economics – ENSEA), in Abidjan; Institut sous-régional de statistique et d'économie appliquée (Subregional Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics – ISSEA), in Yaoundé; École nationale de la statistique et de l'analyse économique (National School of Statistics and Economic Analysis – ENSAE), in Dakar;

(b) International organizations and government institutes: Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies – INSEE), European Union, Eurostat, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Expertise France, Mwanzo Bora Nutrition Programme (MBNP), Office of the Surveyor General of Nigeria, Ministry of Rural Development and Land Reform of South Africa, Joint Research Unit of Paris-Dauphine University and the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD-DIAL), French Development Agency (AFD) and FHI 360;

(c) United Nations organizations: United Nations Statistics Division, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat);

8. The observers attending the joint session also included regional and international statistics consultants and other prominent personalities and media representatives.

IV. Opening of the joint session

9. Participants were welcomed to the joint session and to its venue by Georges Philippe Ezaley, Mayor of Grand Bassam, who made introductory remarks. His welcome was followed by brief remarks by Doffou N'guessan Innocent, Director General of the National Institute of Statistics of Côte d'Ivoire, Charles Leyeka Lufumpa, Director, Statistics Department, African Development Bank, Rene Kouassi N'guettia, Director of Economic Affairs, African Union Commission, and Oliver Chinganya, Director of the African Centre for Statistics, ECA.

10. The joint session was officially opened by Niale Kaba, Minister of Planning and Development of Côte d'Ivoire. In her remarks, Ms. Kaba highlighted the importance of data on economic statistics for the continent's integration agenda. She indicated that the domain of economic statistics was in the early stage of development in many African countries and that the lack of adequate human resources specializing in that area was one of the challenges that it faced.

V. Election of the Bureau

11. Participants approved the following composition of the Bureau:

Chair:	Côte d'Ivoire
First Vice-Chair:	Chad
Second Vice-Chair:	Kenya
First Rapporteur:	Tunisia
Second Rapporteur:	Malawi

VI. Proceedings

A. Session I: Strengthening economic statistics to support Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. Keynote address

12. The keynote address was delivered by Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa, former Acting Vice-President and Chief Economist at the African Development Bank. He took, as the topic for his address, the current era of high expectations for many African countries, which were seeking to become middle-income economies, and for the continent, which was on the cusp of economic transformation. Efforts at the national level varied widely from country to country, however. Improvements had been achieved in most African countries, with the exception of those in conflict or post-conflict situations. Attention must be given to the data needs raised by new initiatives such as Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda and to the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead.

13. Rebutting criticisms levelled against African statistical undertakings, he pointed to significant progress in the continent in recent decades in improving data collection and in creating dissemination platforms across a number of African countries.

14. There was need to consider whether African statistical agencies were supply-driven entities trapped in decades-old routines or wished to transform themselves into demand-driven and innovative institutions that listened to the needs of their clients. To that end,

Africa's statisticians should endeavour to align themselves with the rising expectations for the transformation of Africa. Ultimately, the value of the contribution by statisticians to the transformation of Africa would be determined by the effectiveness of their efforts to raise domestic productivity, enhance competitiveness, and reduce poverty and regional disparities.

15. In conclusion, he stressed that the challenge faced by statisticians was to be able to rise to the moment and to be innovative in the collection, analysis and dissemination of data. Accordingly, policymakers must ensure that statistical offices were well supported in terms of technical, financial and human resources. Statistics must not be relegated to a mere side-show of the line ministries to placate external agencies such as donors.

2. Status and challenge of harmonization in the collection, production and dissemination of economic statistics in Africa

(a) Presentation

16. The presenter gave a brief overview of challenges faced by African countries in the collection, production and dissemination of economic statistics. The challenges identified included the use of different versions of the System of National Account and classification and different base years by African countries, and the growing demand for economic statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals process. There was a great need to build the capacity of national statistics offices and for efforts to meet the training, technical assistance and financial assistance needs of all countries. In conclusion, the presenter gave a brief overview of the African common project on the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts, the progress made and the challenges and issues identified during its implementation.

(b) Recommendations

17. The participants recommended:

(a) That all institutions working in statistics, including national statistics offices and ministries in charge of planning, should be involved in the convergence process for the identification of indicators for the first ten year implementation plan for Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the interests of economy and efficiency in reporting;

(b) That member States should streamline their national indicators in line with Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

B. Session II: Report on the implementation of the resolutions of the ninth session of the Committee of Directors General

1. Presentation

18. The presenter briefly reviewed the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Committee of Directors General of the National Statistics Offices at its ninth session, held in Libreville in November 2015.

2. Discussion

19. In the ensuing discussion, participants supported the idea of holding the joint session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Committee on Statistics separately from that of the African Symposium on Statistical Development. They also highlighted the need to look at all previous recommendations and to document the status of their implementation.

3. Recommendations

20. The participants recommended:

(a) That pan-African organizations be invited to advocate implementation of the ministerial decision to allocate 0.15 per cent of the national budget to statistics by calling upon their member countries to ensure implementation of the decision;

(b) The ECA should be commended on the appointment of the Director of the African Centre for Statistics.

C. Session III: Strategy for the harmonization of statistics in Africa

1. Reports of specialized technical groups

(a) Presentations

(i) Migration statistics

21. Participants learned that the key achievements under the group on migration statistics were the compilation of labour migration statistics in Africa and the work on harmonization of concepts and definitions of migration data in Africa. The next step was to publish the first labour migration statistics report, to finalize the harmonization of concepts and definitions and to launch the second compilation of data on labour migration in Africa.

(ii) Trade statistics

22. The primary activities undertaken by the group on trade statistics were the collection of foreign trade data, using well-structured methodology, and the training of the regional economic communities and member States in the use of Eurotrace software. The next step was to finalize the data collection process, publish the statistical year book and finalize the development of the module on trade price indices.

(iii) Governance, peace and security statistics

23. The report of the group on this issue indicated that Africa was leading at the global level in the compilation of governance, peace and security statistics and should capitalize on the achievements of the pilot phase of that process so that the experience of the continent could be shared at the international level. It was noted that the pilot phase on 10 countries had demonstrated the applicability of governance, peace and security instruments through a wide range of national contexts. The next step was to review the methodology to take into account Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, to include a governance, peace and security module in surveys and to build the capacity of producers and users of statistics on governance, peace and security.

(iv) Gender statistics

24. In its report on gender statistics the group discussed the following issues: implementation of the African Programme on Gender Statistics; outcomes of the meeting of the African Working Group on Gender Statistics; development of the African Programme on Gender Statistics over the period 2017-2021; the signed memorandum of understanding between the African Development Bank and UN-Women; the online training toolkit on gender statistics; the gender statistics toolkit on women in informal cross-border trade in Africa; the manual for countries to conduct an assessment and develop national gender statistics; the UN-Women flagship programme initiative on the theme “Making every woman and girl count”; and the African Gender and Development Index.

(v) National accounts

25. The report of the group on national accounts presented and updated a number of processes on which the group had embarked. It clarified that the goal of the African project on the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts was to improve the quality, timeliness, consistency and harmonization of economic statistics and national accounts in Africa, in support of sound macroeconomic policy formulation and evidence-based decision-making. One of the significant outcomes of the group’s annual meeting, held in April 2016, had been its supply and demand matrix of technical assistance for the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts in Africa, designed to meet the training and technical assistance needs of countries and to ensure better coordination of the delivery of technical assistance. During the meeting of the continental steering committee for the project, held on 31 October and 1 November 2016 in Tunis, an implementation plan for the second phase of the project had been developed for the collaborative implementation of the project by all key stakeholders in 2017.

26. In response to that presentation, participants agreed that the technical documents developed on such issues as supply-use tables, the use of administrative data and the incorporation of the informal sector into national accounts should be finalized and circulated to support countries in their efforts to deal with those issues. In addition, participants also identified the need for capacity-building, including training and technical assistance for the adoption and application of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting, to support tracking of the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants urged countries to finalize national action plans for the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounting by April 2017 and to send the plans to the central depository at ECA for review and sharing of experiences and best practices. Lastly, they encouraged countries to take follow-up actions to implement their national action plans.

(vi) African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources

27. The presentation of the report by the African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources (AGROST) outlined the support provided by AGROST to the training component of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. In that context, the report noted finalization of the curricula for a specialized programme in agricultural statistics, the requirements for the availability of statisticians, the need to improve data quality, the identification and hierarchization of needs in human resources management in African statistical systems, and the strategy for reinforcing the capacity of statistical training centres. In addition, questions were raised regarding how AGROST could support statistical training centres for the implementation of the curricula developed by the Global Strategy; what strategy should be followed in raising funding for statistical training in Africa; what role AGROST should play in the governance of the new statistical training centre.

(b) Discussion

28. In the ensuing discussion of the reports, concern was expressed about the previous resolution to allocate a mere 0.15 per cent of national budgets to statistics, given the need, in particular, for considerably increased resources for the conduct of population and housing censuses. It was explained that the decision could not be amended, since it had been already endorsed by the ministers of finance and planning and would be submitted for adoption by the Heads of State and Government in January 2017.

29. Attention was also drawn to the need to prioritize statistics and to align them to national development plans to secure adequate financing.

2. Draft revised version of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa

(a) Presentation

30. The presentation of the draft revised version of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa gave a brief overview of the status of implementation of the existing Strategy and its limitations, including limited awareness, absence of monitoring and evaluation and low political commitment. The presentation also highlighted the governance structure of the revised version of the Strategy and its proposed outline.

(b) Discussion

31. During the ensuing discussion, participants drew attention to the need to ensure professional independence and transparency. They also expressed concern that the document was being revised by experts who had worked on the first version of the Strategy, representing a clear conflict of interest. In addition, they stressed the need to expand the team working on the revised Strategy to benefit from a greater pool of experience and technical expertise and recommended that heads of national statistical offices and experts in the domain should also be included. Participants agreed that the revised version of the Strategy should provide a clear communication strategy that helped to create awareness among member States.

(c) Recommendations

32. The participants recommended:

(a) That partners should be invited to conduct training and provide technical support to member States on the System of National Accounts 2008 and to help to mobilize financial resources in support of economic statistics and to strengthen coordination of their activities;

(b) That ECA and partner organizations should be called upon to continue to focus on developing the human resources needed for the sustainability of the system for producing quality agricultural statistics;

(c) That pan-African organizations should be encouraged to take measures to ensure that the training schools benefited from capacity-building initiatives and activities;

(d) That the African Union Commission, working in collaboration with the African Development Bank and ECA, should set up a group of experts representative of all African regions, including the two consultants, for the purpose of working with directors general of national statistics offices to come up with a revised strategy that responded to African aspirations, articulated the concerns covered by Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda, and also the issues of data revolution, big data and other emerging issues arising from its terms of reference. That strategy should be validated by the directors general of national statistics offices before submission to the ministers.

D. Session IV: Ongoing, new and emerging issues

1. Report on urbanization data and statistics

(a) Presentation

33. The report on urbanization data and statistics reviewed the summary findings from the assessment of urbanization data and statistics in Africa that had initially been carried out to gain a better understanding of the relevant indicators of urbanization produced over recent years by African countries. The report went on to assess the quality of those indicators and to identify gaps in indicators that were not currently produced yet desirable, in particular for the implementation of goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals. It also assessed the extent to which the indicators produced in Africa could monitor progress in incorporating urban statistics in overall national development planning; and evaluated Africa's experience of producing relevant indicators during the 2020 round of population censuses.

34. In addition, the report reviewed the strategy for an African programme on urbanization data and statistics designed to generate comprehensive, comparable and reliable information for evidence-based policies and strategies to promote sustainable cities and human settlements as drivers of inclusive growth and transformation. The strategy sought to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to collect, compile and analyse urban statistics through a coordinated regional approach.

35. Lastly, the report noted that the need for urban development statistics in Africa was informed by national development plans, strategies and visions, including Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat-III).

(b) Recommendations

36. The participants recommended:

(a) That the proposal for the establishment of the African programme on urbanization data and statistics, based on the assessment report on urbanization data and statistics in Africa, should be endorsed;

(b) That the definition of the concept of urbanization should be harmonized and adapted to the context of African countries.

2. Report on statistical development in Africa

(a) Presentation

37. The report covered selected areas of primary focus for statistical development in Africa, highlighting the progress made in statistical activities conducted by ECA with the support of partners. It also examined the major constraints on progress in selected areas.

(b) Recommendations

38. The participants recommended:

- (a) That the report should be endorsed;
- (b) That the following action points should be pursued:
 - (i) National capacities should be built for the design and implementation of national strategies for statistical development in the context of the national and international agenda for sustainable development;
 - (ii) Capacities should be built for the implementation of ongoing activities relating to the 2008 System of National Accounts, gender statistics, civil registration and vital statistics, and GIS;
 - (iii) There should be effective participation by African countries in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses.

3. Report on the African Statistical Development Index

(a) Presentation

39. The report briefly reviewed the structure, strengths and weaknesses of the existing African Statistical Development Index and potential areas of the index that should be revamped, including the monitoring and evaluation of statistical development in Africa. The report also compared the index with other statistical capacity indicators at three levels: selection of variables, data collection and methodology of calculation.

(b) Recommendations

40. The participants recommended:

- (a) That the methodology outlined in the report should be endorsed;
- (b) That pan-African organizations and countries should put in place institutional mechanisms at the continental level to support the implementation of the Index developed by ECA;
- (c) That ECA should develop periodic data collection arrangements for the computation of the index.

4. Report on the use of mobile technology in Africa

(a) Presentation

41. The report outlined the background to the ECA project on the use of mobile technologies to collect data. The main objectives of the pilot project were to strengthen the capacity of countries to collect data with mobile technology; to experiment with self-enumeration using mobile devices; to determine the suitability of such data for the production of statistics; and to strengthen working relationships between national statistics offices and national training and research institute.

42. The activities undertaken by the project included an expert group meeting, training, mission to countries, national workshops, the upgrading of facilities, field data collection, and the conduct of a regional conference and midterm evaluation. The report also recommended that member States should adopt the use of mobile technology in statistical process and called upon governments to make budget allocations to develop the use of mobile technology in statistical processes.

(b) Recommendations

43. The participants recommended:

(a) That African countries should be urged to allocate the necessary resources for the use of mobile technologies and to establish a cost-sharing mechanism at the continental level;

(b) That countries should be encouraged to give priority to South-South cooperation for capacity-building in data collection using mobile devices.

5. Report on the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics

(a) Presentation

44. The report briefly outlined the background to the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics. It summarized the key achievements and progress made in the area of civil registration and vital statistics, including institutionalization of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, formation of the regional core group, improved collaboration between key stakeholders in national civil registration and vital statistics systems, capacity-building activities and comprehensive assessment of such systems and the development of strategic improvement plans. The report also highlighted some of the associated challenges, including funding for the programme.

45. Lastly, the report proposed items for discussion, such as the organization of the fourth session of the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration, resource mobilization for civil registration and vital statistics and the monitoring and evaluation of civil registration and vital statistics systems.

(b) Discussion

46. In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed that the outcomes of peer review reports should be circulated to all stakeholders. They commended ECA on having revamped the work on civil registration and vital statistics and proposed that the progress achieved thus far and suggestions for future work should be tabled for consideration by the Conference of African Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration. Lastly, they highlighted the need to beef up the civil registration and vital statistics secretariat capacity at the African Centre for Statistics.

(c) Recommendations

47. The participants recommended that pan-African organizations and partners should be invited to provide strengthened support to the Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics programme, in particular the training of experts.

6. Report on the 2020 round of population and housing censuses in Africa

(a) Presentation

48. The report gave a brief overview of the preparations for the 2020 programme of world population and housing censuses and the revision of the African addendum to the principles and recommendations for such censuses. It also reviewed the 2020 census activities in Africa and summarized the expected census periods by year and country. It then looked at the programme for the 2020 round of African population and housing censuses (for the decade 2015-2024) and the workplan for 2016-2020. In addition, the report proposed items for discussion during the meeting, which included the 2020 census activities in Africa and the Sustainable Development Goals, creation of a regional census-coordinating committee and the establishment of a regional centre of excellence.

(b) Recommendations

49. The participants recommended:

- (a) That all African countries should be invited to participate in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses;
- (b) That UNFPA should be requested to increase its support for the 2020 round of population and housing censuses;
- (c) That countries should be encouraged to make more extensive use of mobile technologies in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses;
- (d) That pan-African organizations should be urged to assist fragile countries to conduct a population and housing census before 2020.

E. Session V: Reports on side events

1. Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV)

50. The seventh meeting of the Forum for African Statistical Development was held on Monday, 28 November 2016, and attended by representatives of African countries, the African Union, bilateral and international institutions, the United Nations Secretariat and its specialized agencies, African statistical training centres, and regional and subregional organizations.

51. At its seventh meeting, participants discussed a range of issues relating to statistical development in Africa. Those included the statistical capacity-building programmes of pan-African institutions and international organizations and bilateral partners; coordination among all institutions involved in capacity-building in statistics; the role of the African Statistical Institute in the African statistical system; and South-South cooperation in the domain of statistical capacity-building.

52. Participants expressed appreciation for the commitment shown by ECA to the strengthening of the statistical capacity of ECA member States, the regional economic communities and pan-African institutions in the areas of policy, research and knowledge delivery. They urged pan-African institutions to improve their coordination of statistical capacity-building activities on the continent, under the leadership of countries and giving priority to South-South cooperation. Lastly, they requested ECA, working in close collaboration with the African Development Bank, the secretariat of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-First Century (PARIS21), and the World Bank, to convene the next meeting of the Forum in 2017.

2. Data-sharing

53. A presentation on data-sharing within the framework of the joint African Statistical Yearbook was made on Monday, 28 November 2016. The presentation reviewed the data-sharing initiatives engaged in by the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and ECA, notably the knowledge-sharing week held from 13 to 17 June 2016, in Addis Ababa, with the aim of learning from statistical production processes in the three institutions. The exercise had enable all participants to explore means of avoiding duplication in data-collection efforts by capitalizing on the respective capabilities and expertise of each institution. That initiative would result in reducing not only the cost of data collection, but also the reporting burden, which weighed heavily on national statistics offices. The ultimate goal of the initiative was to establish a unique data repository at the continental level available to organizations needing access to data on Africa.

54. Participants at the event requested the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Committee on Statistics to deliberate on the following issues:

- (a) Allowing access to any and all data provided to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), including private data held by the three institutions;
- (b) Establishment of one-stop data-sharing mechanisms in the national statistical systems, to preclude duplication of effort by development partners and to reduce the response burden;

(c) Support for the implementation of an open data portal for data-sharing for the African Statistical Yearbook;

(d) Support for the use of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) system for future data-sharing activities.

3. Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Community

55. At the presentation on Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Community, held on Monday, 28 November 2016, participants learned that the community, launched in August 2015, was a knowledge-sharing platform offered by the African Centre for Statistics as a service to African statistical professionals and others providing statistical information for the effective planning, management, monitoring and assessment of the continent's national and interregional development efforts. The community had more than 500 members, who contributed and shared the experiences of 50 countries on various aspects of statistical activities.

56. The presentation demonstrated how Solution Exchange tracked the following six performance indicators: community growth, community vibrancy, organizational and regional balance, number of consolidated replies, turn-around time, and user satisfaction. Those indicators were measured against targets set by the Advisory Group. In that regard, the performance over five quarters, ending in September 2016, had given the impression that this service filled a gap in the need for a knowledge-sharing platform and also demonstrated the need for its performance to be still further improved. The African Centre for Statistics and the Advisory Group would endeavour to improve the levels of participation, promote gender equality and the regional balance of the members and to ensure the financial viability and, by extension, the sustainability of that important tool.

4. Strategy for the integration of geospatial and statistical information

57. A presentation of the proposed strategy for the integration of geospatial and statistical information was given on Monday, 28 November 2016. It was attended by a substantial number of participants, including representatives of 10 African countries, along with observers from international organizations, including the African Union Commission, ECA, the secretariat of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, universities, industry organizations and the private sector. The presentation, outlined the overarching principles for the integration of geospatial information and statistical information in Africa, which were drawn from the global statistical geospatial framework being developed at international level. It was explained that, for such information to be integrated, a paradigm shift was required in the manner in which information was produced and used: fundamental, authoritative, up-to-date and spatially enabled statistical information must be consistently available and accessible for informed decision-making at the local, national, regional, and global levels.

58. Participants further took cognizance of the proposed national development information infrastructure, a new prototype information infrastructure designed to ensure that the information products and resources used in policymaking and sustainable development were appropriate.

59. Following the presentation and the ensuing discussion, participants recommended that national statistics offices and systems and national mapping agencies should be encouraged to pursue the integration of geospatial and statistical information and to improve institutional coordination between the two subject area in the context of the Agenda 2063, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 2020 round of censuses.

F. Session VI: Exchange of views on statistical activities: coordination and partnerships

1. Presentations

(a) African Symposium for Statistical Development

60. The presenter gave a brief historical overview of the African Symposium for Statistical Development, summarizing the main outcomes of the Symposium's twelfth session, held from 2 to 4 November 2016 on the theme of strengthening basic economic statistics for the compilation of national accounts. Participants were informed that the Symposium would maintain its focus on economic statistics and national accounts at its next session and until 2020. The Committee on Statistics was called up to endorse the resolutions adopted by the Symposium at its twelfth session and to provide guidance on their implementation. In addition, the Symposium was developing a five-year national action plan to strengthen basic economic statistics for national accounts compilation, which would be finalized by January 2017, and aimed to submit the national action plan to the central depository at ECA for its review and to benefit from the sharing of experiences and best practices.

(b) Forty-eighth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

61. A presentation was given on the forty-eighth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, scheduled to take place in New York from 7 to 10 March 2017. Participants learned that documents for the session would be available on the website of the United Nations Statistics Division. Member States were invited to express their views and to provide guidance on how Africa could contribute to the work of the United Nations Statistical Commission at that session and to indicate the agenda items on which they might wish to lead discussions at the session. With regard to the nomination of African representatives to the High-Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building and the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, it was decided that the same representatives should remain in place for the following two years.

2. Recommendation

62. Following those presentations, the participants recommended that all partners should be called upon to continue their support for statistical development in Africa.

G. Session VII: Statutory issues

1. Presentation of the ECA statistical programme for the biennium 2018-2019

63. The representative of ECA gave a presentation outlining planned statistical activities for the period 2018-2019. Those activities would cover such areas as statistical development, geo-information, national accounts, demographic and social statistics, the preparation of databases and publications and data technology. The presentation also covered the action plan for an African transformative agenda for official statistics. Participants learned that, over the biennium 2018-2019, the African Centre for Statistics would maintain its focus on improving the production, dissemination and use of quality data and statistics in Africa for evidence-based policymaking, planning and programme implementation. Particular attention would also be given to the data and statistics needs for implementing and monitoring and reporting on Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

64. In that regard, particular attention would be given to the following areas: methodological work, such as the production of handbooks and guidelines; implementation of field projects; training; the dissemination of information and best practices; open data initiatives; and the provision of technical assistance. The 2030 Agenda had introduced a new development paradigm that emphasized inclusiveness – that no one should be left behind. To fulfil that aspiration, statistics must be disaggregated by sex, geographical location, income and other social and economic dimensions. In addition, statistics should be combined with data from other sources and made available to a wider audience. The representative explained that work by ECA would therefore include a focused advocacy campaign on institutional

issues, including how to align strategies on statistics with national development plans. In short, the need to tackle new data challenges and to exploit new opportunities required a data revolution.

2. Recommendations

65. The participants recommended:

(a) That the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and ECA should be requested to improve their coordination mechanisms;

(b) That clear guidance should be sought from the African Development Bank on the implementation of its statistical programme, including the related administrative processes;

(c) That the ECA statistical work programme for the 2018-2019 biennium and the five thematic areas of the Africa Transformative Agenda should be endorsed;

(d) That more support should be requested from the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and ECA for statistical training through the sponsoring of studies and assistance in the organization of entry exams, and that the human resources capacity in this area should be strengthened;

(e) That the African Union Commission should be encouraged to invite a representative of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices to ministerial meetings, with a view to strengthening the advocacy efforts of those meetings;

(f) That the African Development Bank, African Union Commission and ECA should be requested to assist countries in strengthening their statistical capacity.

VII. Closing of the joint session

66. At the closing segment of the joint session, participants agreed that the Sudan would host the 2017 session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and that Zambia would host the third joint session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Committee on Statistics in 2018.

67. The Commissioner for Economic Affairs of the African Union Commission, speaking on behalf of the three pan-African institutions, extended sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire, Eurostat, PARIS21, the United Nations Statistics Division, UNFPA and all other partners for their sustained support for the development of statistics on the continent.

68. Closing remarks were then made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire, who expressed his satisfaction with the overall manner in which the joint session had proceeded and its outcomes. He highlighted the quality and importance of the topics discussed and called on all participants to continue to strive for the development of statistics on the continent. In conclusion, he thanked all the collaborating partners for their contribution to the development of statistics in Africa.

69. Following those closing remarks, speaking as its chair, he declared the joint session closed.