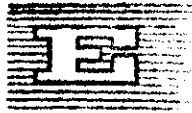


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Economic Commission for Africa  
Second Conference of Africa Statisticians  
26 June 1961, Tunis

GENERAL INFORMATION NOTE

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## I. Introduction

The second Conference of African Statisticians will convene at Tunis (Tunisia) on 26 June 1961, in accordance with the programme of work approved by the Economic Commission for Africa at its third session (Project 04-01 (c)).

This is the follow-on from the first Conference, held at Addis Ababa in September 1959, the report on which, adopted at the Commission's second session, (resolution 12(II)), stipulated that:

"further sessions of the Conference, and meetings of experts or officials in sub-regions should be convened, when necessary, to review training activities and to further the development of the Statistical Survey of Africa" para. 64.

The provisional agenda to be submitted for the approval of the Conference is based on the above recommendation. One important task of this second Conference will be to review progress in the Statistical Survey of Africa and training activities. The Conference will also discuss Secretariat activities and all the working groups and consultations of statisticians held since 1959 and will determine a programme of regional activities for the period 1961-63.

It thus appears that this second Conference of African Statisticians will play a major role in statistical development policy in the region. This trend is in keeping with the wishes of the Commission, which in its last annual report to the Economic and Social Council (paragraph 249) "noted with gratitude the kind invitation of the Government of Tunisia to the Conference of African Statisticians to hold its next meeting in Tunis and expressed the hope that that Conference would play as important a part as that of its European and Asian Counterparts".

## II. Arrangements for the Conference

As an organ for discussing and deciding questions of general statistical development policy, the Conference should above all bring together officials

with responsibilities in the sphere of statistical development. Hence, logically, invitations are being sent out primarily to the heads of the statistical services of members and associate members of the Commission. Numerous consultations in 1960 between the Secretariat and these services have enable certain conclusions to be drawn, which are given here merely for information.

Firstly, the hope has been expressed that delegations will consist of two, or at most three, persons - so as to keep the Conference down to manageable proportions. In view of the importance given on the agenda to national accounts and foreign trade statistics, delegations might usefully contain experts on these subjects alongside the chief of the statistical service.

Secondly, it appeared desirable to cut the length of the Conference down as much as possible - e.g. to ten days, like the first Conference. It would certainly be difficult to make it much shorter, considering the number of items on the provisional agenda. Again, each of these items might, if care is not shown involve days of discussion, should details of statistical techniques be gone into. This is apparently not the view of the statistical services consulted, which consider that full discussion of statistical techniques should be left to working groups set up by the Conference to meet in the intervals between sessions. The role of the Conference would then be limited to defining the terms of reference of the working groups, following their progress and discussing their reports before finally recommending adoption.

One last remark: Many statistical services have requested that international recommendations on statistics from United Nations organs should be systematically brought to the notice of the Conference, which could play a useful part in disseminating them and, if necessary (on request), studying

how they might be implemented in Africa. In so doing, the Conference would merely be conforming to the practice instituted in Europe or Asia under the auspices of the regional statisticians' conferences.

### III. Reception of delegations

The Tunisian Government has been good enough to offer the Executive Secretary the necessary facilities for the Conference (premises, interpretation equipment etc.). Moreover, as stated in the letter of invitation, the Chief of the Tunisian Statistical Service, Mr. Bahroun, has undertaken to reserve rooms for delegates indicating their date of arrival and flight number. Arrangements will be made for reception at the airport. (Address: Mr. Bahroun, B.P. 65, Tunis).

### IV. Provisional agenda

The provisional agenda contains five sets of items to be submitted for the approval of the Conference, which may of course add any other item it would like to discuss. The five sets of items are as follows :

Deliberations of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UN Statistical Commission (item 4);

Progress report, Statistical Survey of Africa (item 5);

Training and recruitment problems (item 6);

Report on work accomplished at the regional level (item 7);

Programme of work 1961-63 (item 8).

Some particulars of preparation for discussion on the various items are given below.

V. Deliberations of ECA and the UN Statistical Commission (item 4)

This item is subdivided under two headings: (1) proceedings at ECA's second and third sessions (item 4-a) and (2) proceedings at the Statistical Commission's eleventh session (item 4-b).

Separate reports will be prepared by the Secretariat under these headings, the main purpose being to apprise the Conference of conclusions and recommendations of interest to it. This questions has been placed first on the provisional agenda, in view of the implications of these conclusions and recommendations for the work of the Conference.

VI. Progress report on the Statistical Survey of Africa (item 5)

(a) Statistical problems and progress of individual countries and their programmes for statistical development (item 5-a)

The programmes here concerned are those referred to in paragraphs 42 and 43 of the report on the first Conference:

"42. The Conference stressed the importance of starting the Statistical Survey of Africa by preparing programmes of statistical work covering the next five years. The statistical offices would need to take the lead in the preparation of such programmes and emphasis was put on the necessity of ensuring as much support as possible at the highest levels of government for this initial phase of the Survey. Some countries reported that their statistical programmes would be incorporated in their overall development plans. In others, intra-governmental committees would review the statistical requirements and establish programmes.

43. It was agreed that such programmes should indicate not only objectives with specific references to concepts, definitions, coverage and frequency, but also the means to be adopted, such as plans for specific types of field surveys, with a tentative annual time schedule designed to show the phasing of the operation over the total period. This would enable statistical offices to arrive at definite plans concerning the personnel and financial requirements of their programmes".

Discussion on this particular item of the agenda might begin with a description by the various delegations of action taken in their countries to prepare statistical development programmes.

As has been stressed several times in the ECA Statistical Newsletter, the Secretariat will do its utmost to distribute documents concerning national statistical development programmes. At this date communications have been received from the following countries: Ethiopia, Federation of Rhodesia and Nyassland, Ghana, Morocco, Portugal, Sudan and Chad. Others are announced from Libya, United Arab Republic etc..

The following arrangements are proposed for distribution:

Countries which have already prepared a document on their statistical development programmes and have not sent it to the Secretariat for distribution might transmit it as early as possible, in triplicate, in one of the working languages (French, English). The document will be distributed in the other language as soon as translation facilities in the Secretariat permit.

Countries still at a preliminary stage in the preparation of their programmes might send the Secretariat a short note reporting progress.

Distribution can be guaranteed only for documents reaching the Secretariat by 15 May 1961 at latest. Documents received after that date will, so far as possible, be distributed during the Conference. Lastly, information will be supplied later regarding the type of duplicator available at Tunis, so that delegations so wishing can bring stencils of documents for quick distribution after their arrival.

(b) Regional co-operation for the Statistical Survey (item 5-b)

The Secretariat will draft a report on the individual and sub-regional consultations which have taken place since 1959 and on the various regional co-operation projects resulting from these consultations. On the basis of that report the Conference might usefully discuss the regional co-operation projects and give the Secretariat guidance as to action on future programmes.

(c) Technical assistance in the field of statistics (item 5-c)

A note will be prepared on this subject by the United Nations Statistical Office and Technical Assistance Operations Office. Other institutions may, if they so desire, send the Secretariat a note (in both languages, if possible) on their technical assistance programmes for Africa in the statistical field.

VII. Training and recruitment problems (item 6)

This item of the provisional agenda is subdivided under two headings:

(1) progress in training activities (item 6-a) and (2) the status of statisticians in public service and its impact on recruitment (item 6-b).

The latter item is included at the express request of five statistical services (Ethiopia, Libya, Morocco, United Arab Republic and Sudan) tendered at the Cairo meeting in November 1960.

It is suggested that countries send the Secretariat for distribution a brief report covering mainly the following points:

- (i) range of grades, with definitions, distinguishing between planning and supervisory staff, usually with university degrees, and the executive staff.
- (ii) a table showing numbers on the budgetary strength and indicating vacant posts;
- (iii) possibly, a table showing estimated budgetary strength, if known;
- (iv) recruitment difficulties, including those due to differences in status as between the statistical and other services;
- (v) efforts made or contemplated to solve training and recruitment problems, distinguishing between the various grades.

Arrangements for the distribution of these reports are the same as under item 4. (To reach the Secretariat by 15 May 1961).

VIII. Report on work accomplished at the regional level (item 7)

One or more notes will be prepared by the Secretariat under various headings:

- Item 7-a: Working groups on the treatment of subsistence transactions and on the use of national accounts;
- Item 7-b: Study tour and training centre on population census techniques;
- Item 7-c: ECA programme of external trade statistics;
- Item 7-d: ECA statistical publications and Statistical Newsletter.

The two reports on national accounts by the working groups mentioned under item 7-a were given limited distribution to delegates to the Commission's third session, and further copies will be sent to governments in the region discussion at the Conference of African Statisticians. These documents are as follows:



E/CN.14/60 - E/CN.14/NAC/3: Report of the Working Group on the Treatment of Non-monetary (Subsistence) Transactions within the Framework of National Accounts;

E/CN.14/84 - E/CN.14/NAC/4: Report of the Working Group on the Uses of National Accounts in Africa.

Regarding item 7-0, it may be useful at this stage to quote the following recommendation made at the Commission's third session, on which action by the Secretariat is based:

"In view of the importance of the subject of international and intra-African trade, the Commission urged that the attention of the second Conference of African Statisticians and of the statistical offices of all African countries should be directed to improving the standards of comparability of African trade statistics and organizing an improved service of trade statistics to the Secretariat".

In that connexion, the Secretariat's work would be greatly facilitated if governments could send it, preferably before the Conference:

- (i) a copy of the geographical code used in the foreign trade statistics;
- and
- (ii) a copy of the national Customs nomenclature.

IX. Programme of work for 1961-63 (item 8)

Various conclusions regarding a programme of future work will be drawn by the Conference in the course of its discussions on the different items of

the agenda. It is suggested that these conclusions be rapidly reviewed at the end of the session, so as to provide a general picture of the programme. The Secretariat will prepare suggestions for the Conference under the following three headings:

- (a) working groups of experts;
- (b) regional co-operation for the Statistical Survey of Africa;
- (c) other activities.

N.B. Communications from governments to the ECA Secretariat regarding the Conference of African Statisticians should be sent by air mail to the following address:

The Executive Secretary,  
(for the attention of the Chief Statistician),  
Economic Commission for Africa,  
P.O. Box 3001,  
Addis Ababa,  
Ethiopia.