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**Follow-up to the Third Meeting
of the Sub-Committee on Statistics of
the Committee on Development Information**

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1 Introduction

1. The second meeting of the Committee on Development Information Information (CODI) was held at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Addis Ababa, from 12 to 15 May 2003, with a pre-CODI workshop on “Statistics and Governance” convened on 11 May 2003 and a post-CODI meeting devoted to the formal launching of the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA) on 16 May 2003. The meeting reviewed and took actions on the following items:

- Statistics and Governance
- Country Reports
- The 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA)
- The establishment of the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA)
- The Working Group on Statistics and Governance
- ECA Statistical Activities
- Other Selected Issues

2. The Sub-committee on Statistics called upon the secretariat to undertake a number of activities with respect to statistical development in the region. This document reports on the implementation of some of those activities, the constraints faced as well as some corrective measures for a better and effective achievement of the objectives of the Sub-Committee.

2 Follow-up Activities

2.1 Statistics and Governance

3. Under this agenda item, the Sub-committee reviewed and made recommendation on (i) the concept of governance, related domains, methodologies for measuring good governance and their applications; (ii) the way in which NSOs could play a role in governance issues without losing their credibility; (iii) the need for establishing an African peer review mechanism for the national statistical systems; (iv) the need for ownership, accountability and participatory and multidisciplinary processes.

4. The secretariat was unable to achieve the recommendations made under this agenda item, due to financial and human resource constraints. Nevertheless, the secretariat has drafted a concept paper on the peer review of national statistical systems that could be

seen as an input to a project document to be submitted to partners for extra budgetary fund raising.

2.2 Country Reports

5. The Sub-committee pointed out the limited number of countries, which have complied to the commitment agreed during CODI-II (“The meeting *calls* upon national statistical offices of member states to submit country reports to ECA on the previous year by the end of June of each year”) and urged NSOs (i) to prepare and send well in advance their country reports to ECA secretariat to enable fruitful exchange of experience; (ii) to report on the other components of their national statistical systems; (iii) to post the reports on their websites. On the other hand, the Sub-committee urged ECA (i) to work out a standard format for reporting; (ii) to supplement country reports with country profiles; (iii) to synthesize the reports and select countries that could make presentations on good practices; and (iv) Statistical Training Centres (STCs) were also called to report on their activities.

6. Since the Sub-committee meeting, only six NSOs forwarded their country reports following a template that ECA sent to them. Regarding the content

7. Web searches show that eight NSOs from French-speaking countries and two from English-speaking countries, among the NSOs¹ that have a website, have posted their annual reports.

8. Finally, it would be preferable to renew most of the recommendations on this item, as they were not fully implemented.

2.3 The 1993 SNA Implementation

9. The Sub-committee noted that human resource constraints at the ECA secretariat prevented the Commission from carrying out an in-depth assessment of the 1993 SNA implementation but got an overview of the activities undertaken by AFRISTAT and ECOWAS in this area. The Sub-committee recommended that (i) an implementation strategy should be adopted at the country level; (ii) African government should provide adequate financial and human resources to national statistical offices (NSOs) to implement the 1993 SNA; (iii) specialized training should be encouraged in order to facilitate the SNA implementation.

¹ As of 31 March 2005, 42 NSOs have a website.

10. Since CODI-III, ECA conducted the usual survey on the assessment of the 1993 SNA implementation in Africa. Details on the content are provided in the appropriate report to be presented during CODI-IV meeting. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that some countries have compiled not only the Minimum Requirements Data Set (MRDS) but also the recommended data set including quarterly National accounts and Satellite Accounts. Moreover there are some good practices to be shared:

- The collaboration between the South Africa Reserve Bank and the Statistics South Africa on the compilation of financial sector accounts and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by expenditure. Historically, the South Africa Reserve Bank was in charge of National Accounts;
- The Value-added Taxes (VAT) database at the fiscal department is directly accessible by the Statistics South Africa since 1990;
- Annual compilation of national accounts with the ERE-TES software by the Cameroonian NSO, which manages to frequently complete the six stage of the software while other NSOs are stuck in the first stage for many years. Cameroon is the first African country to implement ERE -TES in the early 1990 with the support of EUROSTAT and AFRISTAT.

2.4 The establishment of the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA)

11. The Sub-committee reviewed the draft terms of reference of the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA) and recommended that (i) the board would be launched soon after CODI-III; and (ii) in view of the growing demand for statistics, ABSA should work out a strategy on accelerating statistical development in Africa.

12. The ECA has organized the launching meeting of ABSA on 16 May 2003 soon after the CODI-III meeting. The first meeting of ABSA was held as well from 10 to 11 May 2004. The main purpose of the latter meeting was to discuss two draft documents entitled “Statistical Development in Africa: A Strategic Framework” and “Statistics at ECA: A Framework for Action” respectively. The details on the attendance and the content of these meetings are provided in a specific report to be presented during CODI-IV meeting.

13. However, ECA felt the need to take the opinion of the stakeholders of the newly established Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV) on the strategic framework document. The Forum, while commending ECA for the effort made, felt that the document needed to be revisited to allow all partners to find their way around the strategic framework. Finally, the Forum agreed to contribute to the production of a Reference Regional Strategy Framework under ECA coordination based on the draft presented and the comments made, in line with the Marrakech Action Plan on Statistics (MAPS). This process is ongoing and will end up in a meeting scheduled to take place in

October 2005, which will gather not only the FASDEV members but also, hopefully, all the directors of African NSOs.

2.5 The Working Group on Statistics and Governance

14. The Sub-Committee noted the importance of involving NSOs in the electoral process at country level and recommended that NSOs should play an efficient role in the electoral process by providing government departments in charge of the elections with all the statistical data needed to ensure the smooth organization of this process without violating confidentiality principles.

15. This recommendation was directed to the NSOs, which may wish to report on what has been done at their country level.

2.6 ECA statistical activities

16. The Sub-committee noted that the high vacancy rate in the Statistics Team has adversely affected the programme implementation and resulted in a decline of the statistics function at ECA and contributed to the loss by ECA of its lead role in the promotion of statistical development in various areas such as national accounts and related fields.

17. The main recommendation of the Sub-committee was to urge ECA and ABSA to work out concrete proposals on how best to proceed to strengthen the statistics function at ECA and to hire more professionals with the right skill-mix in order to properly implement any work programme to be set up in the future.

18. As a follow-up to this recommendation, the secretariat (i) hired three consultants for a period of six up to eleven months and three professionals; and (ii) prepared the above mentioned documents and submitted them to ABSA during its second meeting.

19. Unfortunately, due to budgetary constraints, ECA was not in a position to take into account all the proposals referred to as "Elements of Programme" in the document entitled "Statistics at ECA: A Framework for Action". Nevertheless, ECA should take advantage of extra-budgetary funds to implement some of these activities. For example, a project on "Strengthening the Capacity of African Statistical Systems to Generate Gender-disaggregated Data to Support Policies, to Promote Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women" funded by the United Nations Development Account, will be implemented jointly by the Statistics Team and the African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD), during the biennium 2006-2007.

2.7 Other selected issues

20. The secretariat informed the Sub-committee that students and newly graduate fellows from the Abidjan-based STC spent respectively three and nine months at ECA, working on poverty issues based on household surveys data. The Statistics Team will continue providing internship facilities to the students, subject to budget availability.

3 Conclusion

21. Some of the major assignments since the third meeting of the Sub-committee have not been achieved mainly due to financial and human resource constraints. Nevertheless, actions were taken in order to set up field projects and raise extra-budgetary funds for the implementation of some of the activities identified in "Statistics at ECA: A Framework for Action".