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Economic Commission for Africa

**Inter-Agency meeting on the implementation of the
Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical
Development in Africa in the 1990s.
(Jointly convened by ECA and UNDP)**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6 March 1992

R E P O R T

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The Inter-Agency meeting on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s was held at ECA headquarters, Addis Ababa, on 6 March 1992. The meeting was opened by Mr. Issa B.Y. Diallo, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).
2. The meeting was attended by representatives from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the "Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques" (INSEE), the International Statistical Programs Centre (ISPC), the U.K. Overseas Development Administration (ODA), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT), the "Centre européen de formation des statisticiens-économistes des pays en voie de développement" (CESD-Paris), the ACP Secretariat, and the African Statistical Association (AFSA).
3. Also participating in the meeting were the Chairman (who was also Chairman of the Nairobi Working Group meeting), the Vice-Chairman and the Rapporteur of the Seventh Session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers, as well as the respective chairmen of the Planning, Statistics, Demography and Information Science Committees of the Joint Conference.
4. A proposal was made by the representative of UNDP that pending the adoption of the Terms of Reference, the chairmanship of this Inaugural Inter-Agency meeting should be assumed by the Economic Commission for Africa, the host institution. The proposal was unanimously accepted. The Acting Executive Secretary of ECA then proposed Mr. Ali Badara Tall, Chief, Technical Assistance Co-ordination and Operations Office (TACOO), Chairman for the meeting on behalf of ECA. The meeting unanimously accepted the proposal and elected by acclamation Mr. Tall as Chairman of the meeting.

B. AGENDA

The Inter-Agency meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening address
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the draft provisional agenda
4. Brief statements by UNDP and other organizations
5. Formation of Inter-Agency Committee
6. Needs assessment
7. Future meetings
8. Any other business

C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Opening address (Agenda item 1)

5. After welcoming all the participants, the Acting Executive Secretary of ECA stated that the presence of several agencies and organizations at this first Inter-Agency meeting confirms their continued commitment to statistical development in Africa and to the need for concerted efforts aimed at achieving maximum efficiency in delivering statistical services, taking into account past experience.

6. The Acting Executive Secretary reiterated the cardinal role statistics plays in the process of planning, monitoring and evaluation of socio-economic programmes. He further indicated that the strategy for generating timely, accurate and appropriate statistical information should be accorded high priority by all concerned including the African countries themselves, agencies of the United Nations family, as well as other multilateral and bilateral institutions.

7. He emphasized that co-ordination is extremely crucial to the success of technical co-operation in statistical programmes in Africa, and that lack of such co-ordination in the past led to unnecessary duplication of effort, distorted priorities resulting in wastage of resources. Such co-ordination should also be extended to the country level, for it is only by supporting national programmes and due cognizance of priorities of countries that international efforts can be translated into concrete development activities. In this context the Acting Executive Secretary indicated that aid agencies should meet with national producers and users of statistics in order to contribute to the determination of statistical priorities, explore areas requiring assistance and help work out efficient and cost-effective implementation modalities of statistical activities.

8. The Acting Executive Secretary then underlined the major tasks of the meeting which were: i) to draw up guidelines on Needs Assessment based on the two drafts prepared by ECA/ILO and the World Bank and the Kenyan experience in order to assist countries in ascertaining their statistical needs and in formulating statistical development plans and work programme budgets within the framework of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action; ii) to consider the possibility of setting up sub-committees or task forces to deal with specific issues such as statistical training, household surveys, etc... and iii) to debate on the terms of reference of the Inter-Agency meeting, its structure, membership and future meetings. He further urged participants to bring their experience and expertise to bear when deliberating the above mentioned issues. The aim was to lay a firm foundation for accelerated statistical development in Africa in the 1990s and beyond.

9. Finally, the Acting Executive Secretary expressed his gratitude to all agencies and organizations who have in the past supported statistical activities in Africa and hoped that such assistance would continue and be further strengthened.

Brief statements by UNDP and other organizations
(Agenda item 4)

10. In his brief statement, the representative of the UNDP gave a historical background of the assistance provided so far by the organization to statistical development in the African region. He particularly mentioned the UNDP/World Bank/ECA project - "Data collection related the development programmes and aid flows in Africa", the results of which enabled the elaboration of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. He also indicated that UNDP recently approved a bridging project under the Statistical Development Programme in Africa (SDPA) to enable ECA complete some preparatory work for the successful implementation of the above mentioned Plan of Action. He concluded his statement by hoping that the recommendations from the present meeting would guide UNDP in reviewing its future support to statistical development in Africa, at both the national and regional levels.

11. The representative of UNESCO first congratulated ECA and UNDP for their joint efforts to bring together bilateral and multilateral agencies interested in the statistical development in Africa. He welcomed the setting up of such inter-agency committee which will assist African countries to develop their statistical capacities in a more co-ordinated manner. He further mentioned the seven major programmes of UNESCO and indicated that the statistical component was pervasive in all these programmes. He informed the meeting that his organization is now putting emphasis on the improvement of data compilation, analysis and dissemination. He concluded that UNESCO is ready to cooperate with other agencies in the task of improving statistics in Africa.

12. The representative of UNICEF also congratulated UNDP and ECA for organizing a meeting for agencies involved in statistical development in Africa. He was pleased that the Strategy document formulated in Nairobi recognized the work done by UNICEF in the field of statistical development in Africa. He emphasized his organization's commitment to assist African countries in the collection and analysis of data related to women and children in particular and social statistics in general.

13. In his statement the representative of the UN Statistical Office, Department of Economic and Social Development informed the meeting that following the recently announced re-organization of the United Nations Administrative structure, the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD) has taken over the functions of Department of Technical Co-operation and Development (DTCD) and the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA). The UN Statistical Office is part of the new department and will have full responsibility for country statistical projects funded by UNDP and UNFPA and executed by the United Nations. He indicated that there was close technical collaboration between the UN Statistical Office and ECA, for instance, in the area of methods and standards. The representative underscored the importance of continued and enhanced collaboration.

14. The representative of EUROSTAT highlighted the importance of the establishment of the inter-agency committee which will enable better co-ordination of statistical development activities in Africa. As regards the Strategy document, he asked to be informed about the relationship between the "abridged edition" and the document that was discussed in the Nairobi meeting in July 1991. He asked whether the comments on the EEC involvement in statistical development in Africa made by EUROSTAT at the Nairobi meeting had been taken into consideration in the preparation of the final version of the document. He requested that EEC involvement in statistical development in Africa should also be quoted in the abridged version.

15. In his statement the representative of UNFPA expressed the support of his organization to the establishment of the inter-agency committee and informed the meeting that UNFPA will continue to enhance statistical activities in African countries in the field of demographic data collection, analysis and research.

16. The representative of INSEE-France also congratulated UNDP and ECA for musing the idea of establishing a co-ordinating body in the field of statistical development in Africa. He hoped that the AFRISTAT will also be used as a tool by other organizations in the framework of the Strategy for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action.

17. In his statement the Chairman of the seventh session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers informed the meeting that he was also Chairman of the Nairobi Inter-governmental Working Group meeting which formulated the strategy document. He indicated that the document ceased to be called a "Consultant's Report" after the Nairobi meeting. Now that the document had been approved by the Joint Conference, it is an ECA document.

18. In response to the issue of mentioning EUROSTAT in the abridged edition of the Strategy, it was pointed out that the recognition of the assistance of EEC appeared in the document. This recognition was thought to have covered EUROSTAT, an official statistical organ of EEC. It was also mentioned that comments made at the Nairobi meeting had been incorporated into the revised Strategy. However, the representative of EUROSTAT was invited to hand over to ECA secretariat any further amendments to the Strategy document for consideration before the closure of the Joint Conference. Finally, the Chairman of the meeting indicated that ECA was prepared to play an active role in the inter-agency efforts to assist the African region in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action.

Formation of an Inter-Agency Committee (Agenda item 5)

19. The Secretariat invited the representative of UNDP to introduce this item on the basis of document ECA/STAT/IAM.1/92/1, "Terms of Reference of the Inter-Agency Committee."

20. It was indicated that there was need of establishing a co-ordinating body that would support and complement efforts of ECA and the Joint Conference of African Planners,

Statisticians and Demographers in monitoring the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa. The meeting was called upon to consider the title, membership, structure and functions of the proposed committee.

21. It was also stressed that in constituting the committee, flexible and workable arrangements, whether informal or formal, should be put in place. In addition it was suggested that the activities of the committee be undertaken with minimal costs. Finally the Secretariat appealed for renewed commitment to the development of statistics in the African region through the spirit of collaboration by all concerned.

22. In the discussions which ensued, participants unanimously welcomed the establishment of the committee to monitor the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. However, it was observed that the term "Inter-Agency Committee" was somewhat misleading. In this connection, it was suggested that what was appropriate was a Steering Committee. After some deliberations, the meeting agreed that the committee be called Co-ordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD). It was argued that the above title was more in line with the envisaged functions of the committee, above all it took cognizance of the fact that the committee's life may continue beyond the year 2000.

23. With regard to membership to the Committee, a number of participants felt that the proposed membership was large, this was without prejudice to the rationale for the need to include most actors involved in statistical activities in Africa. In view of the anticipated size of the committee which may be unavoidably large, it was suggested that specific sub-committees be established and that the functions of the committee and the sub-committees should be streamlined and more clearly defined, given the importance of their role. Some participants pointed out that the key to the success of the committee will depend on instituting well managed sub-committees and effective communication.

24. Some participants felt that African countries should be represented on the committee as the major responsibility of implementing the Addis Ababa Plan of Action lay in their hands. In this connection, the meeting was reminded that the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers was for African member States. Therefore, by including members of the Bureau of the above mentioned Conference in the committee, countries were adequately represented.

25. Participants unanimously agreed that the Secretariat for the Committee be located at ECA. However, they called for an effective and strengthened secretariat. This call was made in recognition of the fact that, the only way the co-ordination committee would function effectively was through an efficient secretariat. It was further suggested that the secretariat should be represented in all sub-committees.

26. While the idea of having sub-committees was accepted, a number of participants felt that their mandates and roles should be more explicitly spelt out. Such an approach would facilitate

the evaluation of the work of sub-committees. It was further suggested that sub-committees on research and methodology and computing could be added to the list. If a subcommittee on the latter cannot be constituted, then specific terms of reference for one of the sub-committees should cater for computing.

27. Some participants indicated the sub-committees in which they would be represented. For instance, it was indicated that ILO would be represented in the methods and standards sub-committee in addition to the sub-committee on data sources. EUROSTAT indicated that it would participate in the Committee and that it accepted the leadership of the training sub-committee as proposed by the draft Terms of Reference. This would be without prejudice to whatever interest it may have in the work of the other subcommittees. EUROSTAT also proposed that the agencies should nominate high-level representatives for the Committee in order to ensure effective co-ordination. INSEE expressed interest in the sub-committees on training and data sources.

28. Some participants stressed the need for strong co-ordination in the work of the Co-ordinating Committee and sub-committees. In this regard, it was suggested that co-ordination be explicitly referred to in the terms of reference of the Committee and sub-committees. The meeting was informed of a similar committee on Population Censuses which was operational and successful, partly, due to good co-ordination of its activities and clear articulation of its objectives.

29. The Secretariat acknowledged the need for clear definitions of mandates and terms of reference of sub-committees. On the guidelines for sub-committees, the secretariat suggested that there should be flexible arrangements where sub-committees should identify their own priorities and activities, within the overall framework of the terms of reference of the Committee. Notwithstanding the above suggestions, the secretariat was going to revise the paper on terms of reference by incorporating more details. Finally the secretariat appealed for concerted efforts by the committee in enhancing the development of statistics in Africa.

30. In concluding the discussions on this agenda item, the Chairman confirmed the decision to establish the "Co-ordinating Committee on African Statistical Development" (CASD). It was indicated that the Joint Conference will be informed of this decision. Thereafter, the formation of the committee is expected to be announced at the forthcoming ECA Conference of ministers.

Needs Assessment (Agenda item 6)

32. This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting of the co-ordinating committee which should be held within six months. It was argued that there was need to have a detailed discussion on the item. Further, it was stated that the documents on Needs Assessment were distributed late, therefore, there was little time to study them.

33. However, it was agreed that a task force be constituted to further consider and elaborate on the guidelines on Needs Assessment. In this connection, it was agreed for the Task Force to start its consultation on 8 March 1992. Participants were invited to make their suggestions to the task force on guidelines on Needs Assessment.

Future meetings (Agenda item 7)

34. As regards future meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee on African statistical development, the representative of UNDP supported the view previously expressed by the representative of Overseas Development Administration (ODA) requesting concrete proposals on the date of the next meeting. He observed that it would be ideal to meet within six months to one year.

35. The representative of ISPC raised question of the venue of the meeting and indicated that it would determine the level of attendance. She indicated that although Addis Ababa was mentioned in the guidelines paper, it should be better to make it flexible for a more central place.

36. The representative of ODA emphasized that the committee meetings should be organized in Africa. However, he thought that the meetings of the different task forces or sub-committees could be held outside Africa. According to him Harare and Nairobi could equally be more convenient for the co-ordinating committee meetings.

37. The Chairman of the seventh session of the Joint Conference who is the Director of the Kenyan Central Bureau of Statistics reiterated that co-ordinating committee meeting be organized in six months time. The Committee agreed that in order to maintain the momentum already generated, the next meeting should be held within six months time. Nairobi, Kenya was agreed as the venue.

38. Concerning the working languages during the meetings, English and French were proposed to be the two working languages for the committee meetings. ECA was requested to take into account the financial implications of the decision while preparing its submission for UNDP funding of the regional support to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action under the Fifth Programming Cycle.