



Report on the 12th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD)

I. Background

1. The Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) is an annual international meeting which gathers African statisticians together with regional and international partners to tackle economic, demographic and social themes. Launched in January 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa, the first six ASSDs focused on the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. As a result, all but four countries have successfully undertaken the censuses. The subsequent five ASSDs (7th-11th) have made a big push for the development of the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) in Africa, 27 out of 44 countries have made significant progress. The 11th ASSD held 23-25 November 2015 in Libreville, Gabon adopted a resolution that shifted its focus area from CRVS to economic statistics and in particular national accounts for the next five symposia beginning 2016 until 2020.

2. The shift in focus of the ASSD to economic statistics and national accounts is anticipated to address current limitations with the production of economic statistics in Africa, including the weak statistical capacity and infrastructure, the NSOs' lack of full institutional independence, the inability to acquire administrative data on a regular basis, the low political engagement at the national level to produce quality and timely economic statistics that can be subsequently used in policy decision-making, and the need for harmonizing the production of basic economic statistics which is generally under-developed.

II. Meeting of the 12th ASSD

3. 12th ASSD with a theme of “*Strengthening Basic Economic Statistics for the Compilation of National Accounts*” was held on 2-4 November 2016 in Tunis, Tunisia. The 12th ASSD provided an opportunity for the African statistics community to analyze the extent to which the specialized institutions are able to produce quality and timely statistics that can be used to inform policy formulation, evidence based decision making, and the implementation of sustainable development strategies in Africa.

4. More specifically, the 12th ASSD was significant in that it marked the beginning of the economic statistics round of symposia (2016-2020); served as an advocacy platform to raise awareness among policy makers and the African statistics community of the importance and challenges of compiling basic economic statistics in Africa; and served as a monitoring platform for CRVS and the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses.

5. The 12th ASSD was organized in ten plenary sessions and one break-out group discussion session. During each session, presentations were followed by open-floor discussions. The meeting was attended by more than 230 delegates from 41 countries, six regional and sub-regional organizations, three training institutions; and two international organizations and institutions, including the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Commission (ADC), the African Development Bank (AfDB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Forum of the Development of Statistics.

III. Main Outcomes of the 12th ASSD

6. The representatives agreed that it is important and urgent to produce reliable economic statistics for the compilation of national accounts. In order to comply with the 2008 SNA, there is a need for scale-up efforts for the production of quality economic statistics utilizing an integrated approach, guarantee the independence of NSOs and the African Institutes of Statistics, upgrade human resources through training, and mobilize financial resources.

7. More specifically, in line with the objectives and programme of the meeting, the main outcomes of the 12th ASSD were the following:

1. Civil registration and vital statistics

8. Under the guidance of the Secretariat of the civil registration and vital statistics programme in Africa, countries which have yet to conduct comprehensive assessments are to undertake one and the Regional CRVS Core Group will continue to provide the needed support. In addition, raising resources and establishing a financing mechanism for APAI-CRVS will be prioritize during the upcoming year; in doing so, the sustainability of the programme will be ensured and adequate human resources will be maintained at the Secretariat.

2. 2020 Round of population and housing censuses

9. The computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) system is found to be useful and will be utilized to conduct the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. Nonetheless, due to the high costs of systems and adapting technologies, the requisite systems and equipment is to be purchased based on common use standards and specifications. Lastly, the Reference Centres for Censuses based on Electronic Data Collection in Africa are to be rolled-out to share capacity, skills, and frameworks to aid countries in the transition to CAPI and other multi-mode data collection methods. This process is expected to strengthen the agreed upon South-South cooperation between Brazil, South Africa, Cabo Verde and Senegal, and will be facilitated by the United Nations Statistics Commission and the United Nations Population Fund.

3. Economic statistics and national accounts

10. To strengthen basic economic statistics, it was agreed that priority will be given to improving sources of data, including administrative data, business registers, and conducting surveys. In this regard, countries agreed to strengthen mechanisms to:

- (i) Make full use of administrative data to support the compilation of national accounts;
- (ii) Establish and update business registers as a useful framework for conducting enterprise surveys; and
- (iii) Periodically conduct household surveys in order to incorporate the informal sector into national accounts, which is a significant contributor to employment and GDP in Africa.

11. To better capture the size, composition, and trends of the economy, countries agreed to strengthen the process for rebasing of the base year of real GDP and follow international recommendation of rebasing every five years. Similarly, the experience of countries in compiling quarterly GDP was discussed and the need for strengthening the compilation of basic economic statistics acknowledged. Accordingly, countries were encouraged to strengthen the process for compiling quarterly GDP.

12. For the process of compiling their national accounts, countries agreed to use modern IT Tools and to adopt software such as ERETES, which is supported by pan-African institutions, Afristat, RECs, and development partners. Finally, in the application and dissemination of national accounts, platforms are to be developed at the national level to communicate the importance of quality economic statistics to national decision makers in order to inform policy formulation and evidence based decision making. Similarly, statisticians were urged to communicate with non-statisticians and to use open data as the default position for statistics dissemination.

4. Youth African Statisticians Programme

13. To address the lack of quality statistics, young statisticians have engaged in the ASSD process with the desire to acquire the need technical skills to play the roles imparted to them. In this spirit, Young African Statisticians indicated their desire to participate in the implementation of the 2020 round of population and housing census. National governments and Pan-African institutions are strongly encouraged to embrace the ISibalo Young African Statisticians programme by supporting it with necessary resources.

14. More details can be found in the “Resolutions” of the 12th ASSD as in the Annex.

IV. Way Forward

15. The next Meeting of the ASSD will continue to focus on economic statistics and national accounts until 2020. Accordingly, the 13th ASSD will be hosted in 2017 by Burkina Faso and has been tentatively scheduled for November 2017.

V. Points for Discussion

16. The 2nd Joint Session of StatCom-Africa/Co-DGs is invited to:
 1. Endorse the “Resolutions” of the 12th ASSD and provide guidance on its implementation.
 2. Express support for and provide guidance on the following proposed action points:
 - (a) The five-year national action plan for “strengthening basic economic statistics for national accounts compilation” to be finalized by *January 2017*;
 - (b) Send the national action plan to the central depository at ECA for review and sharing of experiences and best practices; and
 - (c) Take follow-up actions to implement the national action plan once they are formulated.
 3. Express its views on thematic topics for the next four ASSD’s focusing on economic statistics and national accounts.

Annex

“Resolutions” of the 12th ASSD

PREAMBLE

1. **We**, the representatives of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of African States, supported by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the government of South Africa, and other development partners, gathered in Tunis, Tunisia from 2-4 November 2016 during the 12th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) under the theme “*Strengthening basic economic statistics for the compilation of national accounts in Africa*”;
2. **Appreciating** the Government of Republic of Tunisia’s successful hosting of the 12th ASSD and the hospitality of its people;
3. **Appreciating** the advocacy made by the ASSD for a technology-cantered 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (RPHC) for Africa through the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI);
4. **Appreciating** the sharing of lessons learnt by countries on the use of CAPI and the assistance by statistical development partners in supporting countries to partake in the 2020 RPHCs;
5. **Acknowledging** the crucial role of well-functioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems for attaining, monitoring and reporting of Africa Agenda 2030 and Africa Agenda 2063;
6. **Appreciating** the decision of Heads of States to declare 2017-2026 a Decade for repositioning Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Africa’s continental, regional and national development agenda;
7. **Acknowledging** Civil Registration and Vital Statistics as a foundation for complete, efficient and robust national identification systems;
8. **Driven** by the mandate to provide statistics to monitor the Africa Agenda 2063 vision;
9. **Emphasizing** that statistics in Africa Agenda 2063 are the cornerstone for transformation of African economies, and a system that guides developmental issues;
10. **Appreciating** the work done by the African Union Commission, supported by NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank, coordinated by the Secretariat of the African Symposium for Statistical Development on the development of Indicators for Africa Agenda 2063 First Ten-Year Implementation Plan, and selection of the Core Indicators;
11. **Encouraging** the African Union Commission to circulate the complete set of Africa Agenda 2063 Core indicators and the Minimum list to all Directors-General of Statistics for inputs and appreciation; highlight indicators in different colors to distinguish those responding exclusively to Africa Agenda 2063 and those that have 100 per cent convergence with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, finalize profiling of the indicators and metadata to facilitate common interpretation for ease of compilation, ensuring that there is clarity and appropriateness for each of the indicators, and that they represent transformative and integration targets.

12. **Recognizing** the importance of strengthening basic economics for the compilation of national accounts in Africa and the role played by the major players and stakeholders
13. **Acknowledging** the importance of economic statistics for Africa's regional integration, economic structural transformation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the Africa Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063;
14. **Commending** the efforts and ongoing work of the African Group on National Accounts, under the umbrella of the Statistical Commission for Africa, in collaboration with pan-African Institutions, Member States, Regional Economic Communities, AFRISTAT, regional and international organizations, and development partners to implement the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA) in Africa;
15. **Acknowledging** that in measuring progress, it is not possible for any country to implement and adopt the SNA2008 on all elements;
16. **Recognizing** the importance of administrative data, informal sector, business registers and information technology (IT) Tools for the compilation of national accounts;
17. **Recognizing** the need to scale-up technical assistance and institutional capacity building in support of countries through joint and coordinated efforts by all stakeholders;
18. **Noting** the resolutions of the forum of Chairpersons of African Statistics Councils/Boards adopted at their meeting held in Tunis, Tunisia on 04 November 2016;
19. **Noting** the resolutions of the interim committee of the African Statistical Association on the revival of the Association and deliberations on their mandate;
20. **Noting** the resolutions of the Young African Statisticians taken during their 5th ISIBalo conference on the roles they need to play in statistical development.

RESOLUTIONS

1. On Civil Registration and Vital Statistics we hereby resolve that:
 - (a) Under the guidance of the Secretariat, countries which did not conduct comprehensive assessments undertake one and the Regional CRVS Core Group continues providing their support in this regard;
 - (b) We recognize the need for raising resources and establishing a financing mechanism for APAI-CRVS to ensure sustainability of the programme and sufficient human resources at the Secretariat, including tapping into the skills of retired experts available within countries.
2. On 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses we hereby resolve that:
 - (a) We embrace the CAPI system and shall use it in conducting the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses in light of the shared experiences;
 - (b) Equipment and systems should be bought based on common use standards and specifications such that they could be re-used during the 2020 census round due to the envisaged high costs of adopting the technology;

(c) Reference Centres for Censuses based on Electronic Data Collection in Africa, as agreed in a South-South Cooperation between Brazil, South Africa, Cape Verde and Senegal, also facilitated by United Nations Statistics Commission and United Nations Population Fund, should be rolled out to share capacity, skills and frameworks to aid countries in the transition to CAPI and other multi-mode data collection methods.

3. On the strengthening of basic economics for the compilation of national accounts we hereby resolve that:

(a) We shall promote the use of national accounts data among the planners and policy makers in order to increase their use in the national development planning process as well for them to see the need to invest in data collection for basic economic statistics;

(b) In liaison with the pan African institutions and RECs, countries we shall develop a comprehensive capacity building program on strengthening of basic economic statistics to support the compilation of national accounts;

(c) We shall as countries explore and strengthen mechanisms to make full use of administrative data to strengthen the compilation of national accounts;

(d) We shall as countries to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with key partners/agencies that produce administrative data and establish a bridge table between administrative data and national accounts to make a full use of administrative data;

(e) We shall use our National Strategies for the Development of Statistics to guide the systematic achievement in the implementation of national accounts

(f) We shall establish business register systems as a useful framework for conducting enterprise surveys;

(g) We agree that informal sector is a significant contributor to employment and GDP in Africa, and adopt accordingly the 1-2 survey and the labour input matrix system;

(h) We urge the African Group on Informal Sector to complete the work on harmonizing and standardizing questionnaires for informal sector data collection;

(i) We agree to develop a comprehensive economic statistical capacity building programme/strategic plan which will help to strengthen basic economic statistics for the compilation of national accounts and in particular to inform SDG 8 goal – on decent work and economic growth;

(j) We shall advocate for human and financial resources to enable implementation of national accounts plans;

(k) We shall strengthen the process for updating the base year and follow international recommendation of rebasing once in every five years;

(l) We shall develop platforms to communicate the importance of quality economic statistics to national decision makers in order to inform policy formulation and decision making;

(m) We urge Heads of National Statistics Offices (NSOs) to establish an integrated economic statistics approach to coordinate the work in the NSOs between national accounts and data collection processes;

(n) We shall as countries develop linkages between the production of quality statistics and their application through projects such as trade in value-added (TiVA) initiative to integrate into Global Value Chains;

(o) We agree that Supply and Use Tables are basic requirements for both national accounts and the TiVA Database and integration into global value chains, which have implications on trade, manufacturing, and industrialization policy, and as countries producing SUTs we shall participate in the TiVA analysis of Global Value Chains;

(p) We advocate for a timely revision of economic statistics (national accounts SUTs, CPI, etc.) and implementation of the latest standards and classifications;

(q) We agree to use modern IT Tools and to adopt software such as ERETES as supported by pan-African institutions, Afristat, RECs, and development partners for the compilation of national accounts;

(r) We urge statisticians to communicate with non-statisticians and to use open data as a default position for statistics dissemination;

(s) We shall as Member States establish a five-year national action plan incorporating key components such as financial and human resources requirements, timelines, and technical milestones for improving economic statistics and national accounts in accordance with the 2008 SNA;

(t) We entrust ECA to establish a central depository for putting all the national action plans together and to play the role of peer review, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on the progress made and challenges encountered;

(u) We shall with the support of RECs compile national action plans for strengthening economic statistics and national accounts during the next 5 years, send the plans to the central depository before the end of January 2017, hold training workshops and report status of country action plans;

(v) We agree to review the progress made by countries in terms of implementing the action plans and to share our country experiences in dealing with challenges and difficulties every-year when we gather for the ASSD, StatCom-Africa and CoDGs.

4. We support the resolutions of Forum of Chairpersons of African Statistics Councils/Boards on taking appropriate steps to promote and support the accelerated implementation of Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA), increased ratification of the African Charter on Statistics in African countries, ratification of the forum's establishment by StatCom-Africa, ensuring that sufficient levels of funding are made available for its continued functionality, and inclusion of a representative of the Forum of Chairpersons of African Statistics Councils/Boards in relevant pan-African and international structures such as the Committee of Directors-General and Statistics Commission for Africa, etc.

5. We support the resolutions of the African Statistical Association to share with the African statistical community the proposed AfSA Constitution, hold an AfSA inaugural conference in Botswana in November 2017, invitation to members of African statistical community to join AfSA through social media platform such as the African Statistical Association Facebook page; and initiatives to conduct consultations on the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) amongst potential members of AfSA.

6. We support the resolutions of the Young African Statisticians to avail themselves to participate in the implementation of the 2020 round of population and housing census and advocate for provision of opportunities for their participation in the 2020 round of population and housing censuses through skills development and capacity building.

We also hereby urge

1. National governments and Pan-African institutions to embrace the ISIBalo Young African Statisticians programme by supporting it with necessary resources;
2. National governments to maintain their commitment and leadership regarding CRVS improvement process, and use the momentum created during assessments and planning to move to implementation of strategic improvement plans, whilst urging Pan-African Institutions and development partners to provide support for the countries in this regard, through providing guidance and development of regional specialized pools of experts;
3. National governments' commitment to signed protocols such as the African Charter on Statistics, to increase financial commitment, and to support statistical laws for the improvement of national accounts and economic statistics;
4. Pan-African Institutions' commitments in terms of financing and the African Development Bank, in collaboration with donor agencies such as the World Bank and European Union to help mobilize financial resources and establish a trust fund in support of economic statistics and national accounts and to strengthen coordination of their activities and to ensure better economic statistics;
5. The African Union Commission to prepare and present the current situation and progress reports on economic statistics and national accounts every year to the Heads of States and Conference of Ministers from now on for the next five years, to share the report to the African statistical community; and to update the African statistical community on the results;
6. RECS, Afristat and training institutions to strongly coordinate statistical activities and ensure harmonization of standards, tools , methodologies, etc.;
7. International organizations and development partners such as IMF, World Bank, OECD, WTO, Eurostat, and INSEE to scale-up their support for countries to implement their national action plans by providing technical support, capacity building, training and technical assistance, funding and advocacy to countries to increase the financial commitment to statistics.
