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The Statistical Commission for Africa to take charge of statistics development in Africa.

24 January 2008 (ECA) - The first meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa) closed Wednesday 23 January in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with a resolution designating StatCom-Africa "as the apex body in charge of statistics and statistical development on the continent." Close to 200 delegates representing national statistical offices, regional and international development institutions and development partners attended the three-day meeting.

In a statement at the closing ceremony, the director of Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) African Centre for Statistics, Mr. Ben Kiryegera, described the meeting as a historic event coming in the same year as ECA celebrates its fiftieth anniversary.

He commended the partnerships between ECA, the African Union (AU), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, the Partnership for Statistics for the 21st Century (PARIS21), the French Cooperation and InWENT of Germany; which made it possible for such a large number of delegates to attend the meeting.

Mr. Kiryegera said, "big thoughts bring big results," and called on the members of StatCom-Africa to be bold and imaginative in their work to re-establish the glory days of statistics at ECA and in Africa.

The meeting called on African countries to mainstream statistics into national planning and budgeting processes to ensure statistical activities are adequately funded and seen as a key element in the development process, rather than as an add-on. Development partners were also called upon to provide sustainable technical and financial assistance for the collection, processing, analysis and use of data, particularly data necessary for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals.

Other key recommendations:

On the implementation of the Reference Regional Strategic Framework for statistical capacity building in Africa (RRSF), the meeting recognized that statistical development is an expensive exercise and donors play a key role in financing them. It therefore recommended that a mechanism is set up to measure statistical development, which will help donors monitor progress made. It also called on all countries to design a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), which will serve as an overarching framework for national statistical activities.

Regarding the International Comparison Programme for Africa, the meeting welcomed the work being done by the AfDB, and urged AfDB in collaboration with ECA to set up a regional national accounts programme and support the compilation of quality national accounts.

On the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Census, the meeting called for increased advocacy at the highest level, to ensure the commitment of African governments to undertake a population census in the 2010 round. It further called for a clear strategy for conducting the census in post-conflict countries.

StatCom-Africa will meet every two years, but its working groups will meet at least once a year to monitor progress and take strategic decisions on statistical work in Africa. The next meeting of StatCom-Africa is scheduled for 18 – 22 January 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

:: Conclusions and Recommendations of the First Meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa I)

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