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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, COORDINATION  
AND INTER-AGENCY NETWORKING IN STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Born out of the merger of the Millennium Partnership for Africa's Recovery Programme (sponsored by Presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo and Bouteflika) and the OMEGA Plan (sponsored by President Wade), the proposed New Initiative for Africa adopted by the recent Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) constitutes a specific agenda for African development in the initial decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

2. This initiative is a successor to many others aimed at promoting economic and social development in countries of the region. Chief among them are:

- The Lagos Plan of Action and Final Act of Lagos;
- The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD);
- The Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community;
- The Highly-Indebted Poor Countries' initiative (HIPC);
- The Integrated Development Framework;
- The Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework; and
- The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

3. In line with the guidelines of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s, national statistical production activities were to be fully integrated in programmes designed to restructure and transform African economies with a view to providing quantified data on the basis of which the various initiatives could be monitored and evaluated.

4. It was also important under the Addis Ababa Plan, for international statistical co-operation and assistance to be geared to meeting the priorities and programmes of national statistical services and enabling them to become self-reliant.

5. This paper addresses a set of issues relating to international co-operation and inter-agency co-ordination in statistical development. Right from the outset, it briefly describes the major challenges that African countries have to address in developing statistics for the new millennium. It goes on to list the work programmes and inter-agency co-operation arrangements that will enable national statistical services to meet the challenges. It ends by reviewing the main mechanisms instituted or in the pipeline to promote international co-operation, co-ordination and inter-agency networking in statistical development.

## **II. STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA:**

### **MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR 2000 AND BEYOND**

6. The deliberations of the first meeting of the Committee on Development Information (CODI), together with the recommendations coming from the recent evaluation of the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan, clearly highlight the urgent need for national statistical services to take whatever measures are needed to:

- Further sensitize their governments and general public alike to the strategic importance of statistics in promoting the welfare of people and socio-economic development in general during the new millennium since the financing of statistical activities will continue to depend, to a great extent, on such sensitization;
- Respond to emerging data needs, more particularly in terms of ensuring a regular flow of basic and reliable data on poverty and sustainability indicators (demographic and social in particular), the HIV-AIDS pandemic, gender, good governance, economic performance and viability, private sector development, the informal sector and the environment.
- Redefine national priorities for statistical development by generally rethinking the priorities in statistical activities to take into account UN-NADAF and the New Initiative for Africa with particular reference to new data requirements. African countries should also continue paying special attention, in this regard, to the organisation of the 2000 population and housing censuses, the implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA 1993) adopted eight years ago by the Economic and Social Council, the institution of household survey machinery and the reorganisation and strengthening of civil registration;
- Improve data quality and delivery time. The results of surveys and censuses conducted in a large number of African countries are still lacking in quality and taking considerable time to publish. National statistical services should address this by setting up adequate computer facilities and instituting quality control of information not only at the stage of collection, but also at the stages of data processing and dissemination. Generally, they will have to promote quality management of the various components of the national statistical system;
- Build the necessary capacity for taking full advantage of emerging information and communication technologies. More particularly, African statisticians should familiarise themselves with such technologies and be capable of using them fully to improve data collection, storage and dissemination;
- Improve the organisation and management of national statistical systems. Not only does the organisational structure of national statistical services need to be improved to address the growing demand for data, but also programmes for long-

term national statistical development should be prepared in line with national development plans while every effort is made to promote better co-ordination and synergy among the institutions involved in national statistical activities; and

- Forge partnerships for statistical development. Given the serious budgetary constraints facing countries in the region, it has become urgent to promote partnerships at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels in order to mobilise substantial extra budgetary resources to implement statistical development programmes in Africa.

### **III. WORK PROGRAMMES AND INTER-AGENCY CO-OPERATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEW INITIATIVE**

#### **A. Partnerships among regional and subregional institutions and bilateral and multilateral co-operation agencies.**

7. The forging of partnerships among regional and sub-regional institutions and bilateral and multilateral co-operation agencies should be aimed at the twin objectives of enabling them:

- To better play their role as data providers; and
- To improve their assistance to member States in the various areas

8. In this context, several programmatic thrusts can be envisaged in addressing the requirements the New Initiative in terms of:

- Organising and managing national statistical systems;
- Co-ordinating and harmonising policies, methodologies and concepts;
- Developing information systems and databases;
- Establishing functional relations among partners with a view to promoting electronic connectivity and data integration;
- Generally improving the measurement of poverty, demographic, social and other sustainability indicators;
- National accounting performance and economic viability;
- The informal sector;
- The HIV-AIDS pandemic;
- Good governance;
- Gender issues;
- The environment; and
- Training.

9. For each of these programmatic thrusts, several modes of co-operation can be defined in terms of how to:

- Finance regional and sub-regional co-operation projects;
- Share information and experiences;
- Field short consultancy missions;
- Organise training courses, seminars and workshops;
- Participate in international, regional and sub-regional co-ordination activities; and
- Represent regional and sub-regional organisations within the expert working groups established internationally

**B. Partnerships between regional and subregional organisations**

10. In forging partnerships between regional and subregional organisations, the programmatic thrusts should generally follow the lines of those mentioned earlier.

11. In contrast, the co-operation arrangements should be more limited in number and focus especially on:

- Mutual participation in training activities organised by one partner or the other;
- Partnership collaboration aimed, among other things, at country data collection exercises during which member States will be assisted to create their own data bases;
- The sharing of good practices;
- The sharing of information and experiences; and
- The establishment of networking arrangements among the various sub-regions.

**IV. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION AND NETWORKING MACHINERY**

**A. Existing Machinery**

12. At the international, regional and sub-regional levels, inter-agency co-ordination for statistical development activities is conducted by such bodies as;

- The United Nations Statistical Commission;
- The Statistics Subcommittee of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC);
- The Committee on Development Information which happens to be one of the seven technical committees set up in May 1997 by the Conference of African Ministers responsible for economic planning and development within the context of the reform of ECA's intergovernmental machinery. Since that time, CODI has assumed the mandate of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians, Population and Information Scientists. In line with its terms of reference, the committee plays a major role in co-ordinating statistical development policy;

- Region-wide, the harmonisation of classification systems, concepts and definitions together with the promotion of infrastructural facilities at the national level;
- The Co-ordinating Committee for African Statistical Development (CASD). Since its inception in 1992, CASD has been working to co-ordinate statistical development in Africa within the context of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. Currently represented on CASD are ten ECA member States, eight training centres participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) and 18 bilateral and multilateral co-operation agencies (10 of which are Observers). Initially, CASD had four sub-committees responsible for training, data processing, statistical organisation and management and statistical research, methodologies

and standards. Following the restructuring of the committee in 1996, CASD has set up five task forces responsible for: connectivity and statistics (Task Force One), monitoring of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action (Task Force Two), capacity-building for STPA training centres (Task Force Three), national and regional micro-data banks (Task Force Four), and the pilot project on the Country Live Database (Task Force Five);

- The Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa (AFRISTAT). ECA is a member of the scientific board of AFRISTAT, which currently has a membership of 16 French-speaking African countries. The activities of AFRISTAT are aimed at promoting the harmonisation of statistical data required for the implementation and monitoring of sub-regional economic integration activities with a special emphasis on building statistical capacity both in the member States and in the sub-regional economic groupings, namely CEAO, UEMOA and CEMAC. Since its inception, AFRISTAT has been providing support to member States in statistical programming (through the PROSMIC programme and within the context of the medium-term development of national statistical systems), national accounting (preparation of common guidelines for the compilation of 1993 SNA records), nomenclatures for economic activities and products (adoption of a common approach); and the harmonisation of informal sector definitions and concepts.

13. Five and a half years later, both the donors and AFRISTAT member States are generally agreed that the track record of this subregional institution has been largely positive.

14. With regard to CASD, the recent evaluation conducted on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action revealed that the committee had failed to complete its assigned tasks, largely because of the insufficiency and continued erosion of its resources, frequent changes in its membership and the fact that data users are not represented on CASD. The evaluation report notes, however, that CASD remains an important instrument for statistical development in Africa and recommends that the committee should be revitalised and expanded to include officials and decision-makers.

15. With regard to CODI, it may be too early to conduct a review of its co-ordination of statistical development policy in the region, but there are grounds to hope that it will fulfil its mission since a major reflection is being conducted within the secretariat on ways of revitalising the statistical component of ECA's Development Information Services Division.

**B. Proposed establishment of an advisory committee on statistical development in Africa.**

16. ECA plans to set up in 2002, an advisory committee on statistical development in Africa.

17. The committee, whose terms of reference and membership will be considered at a later date, will meet once every two years to propose to the secretariat, recommendations on:

- The ECA statistical work programme, including statistical development policy co-ordination and the harmonisation of methodologies and concepts;
- User data needs and measures to address those needs; and
- Specific issues relating to statistical development in Africa.

**V. CONCLUSION**

18. A comprehensive evaluation of technical co-operation in statistical development for the period 1960-1990 reveals that the assistance given to African countries fell far short of achieving long-term objectives particularly because of the lack of effective machinery for co-ordinating external assistance. It is important to note that this issue continues to be topical to the extent that no satisfactory solution was found to it during the 1990s.

19. Nevertheless, both to be credible and effective, international co-operation and country statistical activities must take into account the New Initiative for Africa's Development.

20. Given the need for mobilising substantial extra budgetary resources to promote statistical development in Africa, particular stress must be laid on the means of strengthening partnerships between bilateral and multilateral agencies and the countries of the region within the context of the New Initiative.