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Addis Ababa, 18 November 2015 (ECA) – “The importance of statistics in our work and in addressing development challenges in our communities cannot be overstated,” says Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa.

Launching the *Solution Exchange for the African Statistical Community*, a UN sponsored peer-to-peer facilitation service, during African Statistics Day, Mr. Hamdok said statistics should “come upfront when we are designing development programmes”.

The *Solution Exchange African Statistical Community* aims to assist professionals with relevant and accurate data to allow them to plan, manage and monitor the performance of their countries’ development efforts. It offers information on important statistical topics such as economics, demography and gender. The Community will also work with data collection strategies, processing, analysis, and management.

Mr. Hamdok said African Statistical Day is a day to hold high and celebrate. “It’s 25 years since the launch of this day and it’s an occasion for reflection”. He pointed out that though the new technologies have positively changed the way in which statistics is gathered, much work, to improve methods, quality and dissemination, remains in the sector.

“Statistics work is advancing in Africa but it still needs improvement in capacity development, analytical skills and monitoring”.

Mr. Chukwudozie Ezigbalike, the Officer-in-Charge at ECA’s African Centre for Statistics noted, “our field is changing because of technology. We now have the capability for immediate collection of data”.

New technologies allow for collection of live data and compilation in real time.

Though this model of collecting data may pose challenges of accuracy and quality, it also offers many opportunities.

“Young people can create employment for themselves through data processing work. There are jobs in data packaging as well,” Mr. Ezigbalike believes.

African Statistics Day is celebrated every year on 18th November to increase awareness on the importance of statistics social and economic development in Africa. It was initiated in 1990 by the Subsidiary Body of ECA; the Joint African Conference of Planners, Statisticians, and Demographers.

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