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ECA/STAT/CASD.5/95/3

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

**Fifth Meeting of the Coordinating
Committee on African Statistical Development
(CASD)**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 25-26 May 1995

REPORT

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. The fifth meeting of the Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) was held at ECA headquarters, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 25 - 26 May 1995. The opening statement to the meeting was from Mr. Makha D. Sarr, Acting Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

2. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Organization of African Unity (OAU); AFRISTAT (Observatoire économique et statistique d'Afrique subsaharienne) Mali, the French Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) France; Southern African Development Community (SADC); The African Development Bank (ADB); Statistics Norway; Statistics Sweden; United States Bureau of the Census; the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE), Makerere University; the Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC) Tanzania; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); The World Bank; the International Monetary Fund (IMF); the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

3. Also participating in the meeting were the representatives of the following African countries: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Nigeria, South Africa and Zambia.

4. Mr. O.O. Ajayi, Director-General, Federal Office of Statistics, Nigeria was unanimously re-elected Chairperson of the meeting:

B. AGENDA

5. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

Plenary meeting

1. Opening statement
2. Election of the Chairperson
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

Sub-committee meetings

- . Research, Methods and Standards
- . Data Processing
- . Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems

Resumed plenary meeting

4. Report from the CASD Sub-committees:
 - . Training
 - . Research, Methods and Standards
 - . Data Processing
 - . Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems
5. Report to CASD by the Secretariat
 - . Review of CASD activities
 - . Progress in implementing the Addis Ababa Plan of Action
 - . Future direction.
 - . Funding for CASD activities
 - . Involvement of CSO Directors in CASD activities
6. Any other business
7. Date and venue of the sixth meeting
8. Closure of the meeting

C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDING

Opening Address (Agenda item 1)

6. In his opening statement Mr. Sarr, Acting Executive Secretary of the ECA recognized the important role being played by the CASD in the coordination of statistical policies, programmes and activities in the African region to complement the efforts of the African countries themselves to achieve self-sufficiency in statistical production as well as make the data produced relevant, reliable, timely and useful. He stated that the task was important not only because of the current state of African statistical development, but also because of the challenging tasks of transformation and development in Africa which require a range of improved statistics and indicators for monitoring and analysis of national, regional and global initiatives in this regard. The Acting Executive Secretary observed that the state of statistics in Africa had over the past two decades been of considerable concern to African governments, various primary and secondary producers and users of African data and multilateral and bilateral organizations. Poor management of statistical offices, inadequate funding, lack of timeliness in delivering outputs, unsatisfactory quality of data produced, inability to respond quickly to new data needs and the lack of proper coordination were cited as some of the deficiencies.

7. Mr. Sarr reminded participants of the importance of improved policy relevant statistical information to facilitate monitoring of important initiatives to address Africa's severe economic crisis, her profound social problems, especially widespread poverty, unemployment, mass population displacements resulting from civil wars and internecine strife, environmental abuse etc. The more recent of such initiatives, he said, included the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), the International Conference on Population and Development, the fifth African Regional Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development. He said that all those initiatives, as indeed others before them, have implications for the statistical community in terms of methodologies, standards and guidelines for new data collection and production, provision of assistance in their application, and effective coordination to facilitate monitoring and evaluating progress towards the desired goals.

8. The Acting Executive Secretary stated that the activities of the CASD are quite in line with the current preoccupation of the ECA aimed at assisting its member States to build critical capacities as is demonstrated by the fact that the last two sessions of the Commission and meetings of the Conference of Ministers responsible for economic development and planning were focused on the theme: "Building critical capacities in Africa for accelerated growth and sustainable development". Mr. Sarr said that through proper and effective coordination the conditions of data collection, compilation, analysis and application could be improved; the use of statistical data from different sources could be increased and promoted; duplication of efforts could be avoided and respondent burden lightened; and data production process could be made more efficient and cost-effective. He observed that statistical cooperation and coordination of statistical policies are more important in the African region where, in a number of cases and with limited resources, the basic infrastructure of the statistical network needs to be rehabilitated and developed if it is to be responsive to the need for development information especially at the national, but also the regional and global levels.

9. The meeting was then adjourned to enable the holding of sub-committees meetings.

RESUMED PLENARY MEETING

Report from the CASD Sub-committees (agenda item 4)

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON TRAINING.

10. The report was presented to CASD by the representative of the World Bank on behalf of the conveners: Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT) and United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration. The report is given in Annex 1(a).

11. In the ensuing discussion the following issues were raised, suggestions made and pieces of information given:

- . A shorter version of the report: "Focusing Statistical Training in Africa" by Mark Woodward consultant to the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration (ODA) was now available.
- . The formal International Statistics Program of the United States Bureau of the Census, was about to be replaced by short, ad hoc, training courses. The International Statistics Programs Centre (ISPC) was in the process of consolidating its training files and opening them to interested parties in what is believed could be a cost-effective way of delivering such programmes. The meeting recognized the important role the ISPC had played in statistical development in Africa, stated that the action would have very adverse effects on the training of African statisticians and express regret that the centre was closing down. The point was made that the closing of ISPC is one more indicator of the need to intensify efforts to strengthen critical capacities of African training institutions, and that the closure presents a challenge to African Institutions to take up activities that were being carried out by the Centre.
- . The representative announced that ISPC is now called International Programs Centre (IPC)
- . On the question on how countries should proceed during the transition period given that a number of African countries use the Integrated Micro-computer Processing System (IMPS) which was developed by the US Bureau of the Census, and which performs major tasks in survey and census processing, the representative of International Programs Center (IPC) informed the Committee that a number of IMPS workshops were planned. In addition,

training and technical assistance activities will continue for some time into the future; only the formal international statistics training program would cease due to financial reasons. ISPC training materials could be made available to the centres participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPS). The US Bureau of the Census would devised ways of helping centres acquire the materials.

- . Attention was drawn to several training courses organized each year by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) eg. on: government finance statistics, balance of payments, national accounts etc. Formal applications for such training, through the appropriate channels, would be welcome from African countries. Award covers transportation , daily subsistence allowance, etc.
- . An invitation was extended to the IMF to become a member of the CASD Sub-committee on Training.

The report of the Sub-committee is attached as Annex 1(a).

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH, METHODS AND STANDARDS

12. A representative from the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) reported on the "Findings of a survey among national statistical offices/agencies on statistical research activities . He informed the meeting that the response rate had been low and therefore did not give a strong basis for defining a strategy or developing action programmes for the Sub-committee. Consequently, it had been agreed that a small group of members comprising UNSD, ECA, and ISAE should draw up a simple questionnaire to be used to collect more information on research activities of countries which did not respond to the main inquiry. The results of this inquiry will supplement those of the main survey.

13. In the ensuing discussion the following comments were made and issues raised:

- . Statistical research should be focused on the development needs and priorities of countries, and that these should first be identified.

- . The present survey questionnaire should be broadened and improved eg. it should solicit information which would indicate the priority areas of research.
- . Efforts should continue to be made to improve the response rate of the survey. Thereafter, the resulting report should be disseminated to donors interested in statistical development in Africa.
- . A suggestion was made that there appeared to be a need for the Sub-committee to come up with some well-defined, and concrete activities that it would try to undertake, quite apart from the survey which has been its main focus so far. Such action plan was necessary, and would have implications for donor support.
- . Also identified was the need to improve communications among members of the Sub-committee.
- . The representative from the IMF informed the meeting that his organization collects and compiles macro-economic statistics according to international standards.
- . The meeting was informed that the International Programs Centre, United States Bureau of the Census, is developing a Census Design System as an automated expert system for producing census questionnaires and generating draft materials for field manuals, processing requirements, and other instructions customized to the questionnaire designed. The application will be developed to provide technical assistance to the 2000 round of decennial censuses.

The Census Design System is intended for use in developing countries that require resources and capacity to:

- apply advanced census methods;
 - develop manuals and training guides;
 - plan tables;
 - contain costs;
 - specify edits; and
 - clarify data processing requirements.
- . Some participants presented brief reports on their research activities and the dissemination of results. It was agreed that dissemination of research results, as well as contents of archives, including mission reports and unpublished papers, was important.
 - . The meeting was informed that efforts will be made to improve on the work of the Sub-committee and that an

improved report on the survey on statistical research activities would be produced.

The summary report of the Sub-committee is attached as Annex 1(b).

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON DATA PROCESSING

14. Before presenting the report of the Sub-committee, Dr. Jan Eklöf, representing the convener of the Sub-committee, Statistics Sweden, introduced Mr. Sten Bäcklund, who would take over from him and represent Statistics Sweden in future meetings of the Sub-committee.

15. In presenting the report, the representative referred to the draft questionnaire on Statistical Electronic Data Processing (EDP) capacity and Inventory of Related Databases, and observed that there was need for CASD to coordinate and integrate the questionnaires of the CASD Sub-committees being sent to countries. He said that integrated questionnaires, which need not be biennial, is what is needed given the high non-response rate of the EDP inventory questionnaire.

16. During the discussion which ensued, the following issues were raised, comments/suggestions made and information given:

- . The Sub-committee did not consider it necessary to introduce a new set of questionnaires, rather it has tried to obtain needed information through affiliation with the ECA biennial EDP survey.
- . The Sub-committee is currently looking into issues of harmonization of technical and procedural aspects of data processing eg. norms and standards for data interchange.
- . It was recommended that the Sub-committee should embark on more concrete activities within the framework of its terms of reference.
- . The need to encourage countries to go beyond the current practice of collecting and storing data, into better data management and retrieval procedures, was indentified.
- . The need for management training was identified, ie. through workshops, seminars etc.

- . The IMF could, through its Bureau of Computing Services, offer expertise to help countries further develop their electronic data systems.

The following is an abridged version of Dr. Eklöf's statement to the closing session of the CASD:

"The Nairobi meeting in 1992 was encouraging. The forming of the CASD sub-committees did make sense in respect to the *Addis Ababa Plan of Action* as lined out in the document of May 1990.

From that platform a machinery has been set in motion. Like all activities this consumes resources, human as well as financial. So the question to raise in the report of the Secretariat is now: *Does the CASD activities promote the ends spelled out in the Addis Ababa Plan of Action in most efficient manners?*

- . Can we find alternative or complementary instruments?
- . Are the ambitions still adequate and realistic?
- . Do we know enough to answer this query?

Right now there are reasons to be sceptical. How can we as conveners motivate the Swedish Government? One dimension relates to credibility and recognition. To me it was discouraging at the joint conference last year to experience the lack of participation from Directors of national statistical agencies. We could also look into the monitoring report. It is very ambitious but introduces measurement difficulties. How should we collect these data? Should we make it compulsory? How do we coordinate our efforts? So how do we proceed? Monitoring, a regular follow-up and evaluation are vital components in order to motivate future activities as well as learning from history.

I will suggest the following *modus operandi* in order to gain credibility and ensure the funding needed:

- . short-list the crucial issues by sub-group
- . establish task forces, working parties or similar arrangements
- . bother about implementation and penetration at an early stage.

March 1996 will be a check-point. *Statistics Sweden* supports the idea of another meeting at that time."

The report of the Sub-committee meeting is attached as Annex 1(c).

**REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION
AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS**

17. The report was presented to CASD by a representative from the Conveners: the ECA and the World Bank.

18. In presenting the report, the representative stated that the main focus of the Sub-Committee meeting was the progress report on Statistical Needs Assessment and Strategy Development exercises and the Report on Pilot Analysis of the Regional Survey on Statistical Organization and Training 1994. Mention was made of the existence of a companion study entitled: Focusing statistical Training in Africa.

The CASD took note of the report which is attached as Annex 1(d).

Report to CASD by the Secretariat (agenda item 5)

19. For the discussion of this agenda item the committee had at its disposal document ECA/STAT/CASD.5/95/1 "Report to CASD by the Secretariat".

20. In introducing the document, a representative of the CASD Secretariat stated that it was an attempt to review:

- i) Activities undertaken by the Secretariat since the fourth CASD meeting;
- ii) Activities undertaken by the substantive CASD Sub-Committees: Training; Research, Methods and Standards; Data Processing; and Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems;
- iii) Progress in implementing the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa; and
- iv) Speculate on the future of CASD and its Sub-Committees.

21. In the discussion which followed the introduction, the following comments/suggestions were made and issues raised:

- . Appreciation expressed to the CASD Secretariat for work accomplished since the fourth CASD meeting.
- . The Secretariat could not perform its duties at the level of efficiency expected of it as it was hamstrung by lack

of adequate resources, for example, to participate in meetings of the CASD Sub-committees, as well as those of other partners in African statistical development, Board meetings of Centres Participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) etc. held in countries other than that where it is located. This has had serious effects on its coordination role. There was urgent need for establishing the enabling environment for the secretariat to function more efficiently.

- . Some agencies/institutions were eager to get assurance from the CASD Secretariat that, if and when invited to participate in meetings in the area of statistical development it would be in a position to take up such invitations, i.e. pay for its participation.
- . It was noted that the ECA had not been able to organize the biennial meeting of Directors of Centres participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) since 1991 due to the termination of the UNDP financial support to the regional component of the STPA project which was executed by the ECA Statistics Division. It was recalled that those meetings had played a key role in the cooperate development of statistical teaching programmes in the African region, in promoting research at the centres as well as in-service/middle level statistical training at the national level. Each centre was now, more or less, on its own. In addition, and for the same reasons, ECA no longer has a post of Statistical Training Officer.
- . It was suggested that ECA should endeavour to reconvene the biennial meeting of Directors of the centres in parallel with other larger forum for which funding for participation of the Directors could be assured eg. the biennial Conference of African Planners, Statisticians, and Population and Information Specialists. In this connection, it was recalled that ECA sent letters to the sixteen STPA Centres requesting them to indicate whether they could finance their participation in the Director's meeting. Only six centres replied, of these three were negative.
- . In the light of the above, participants expressed concern about the effectiveness of the role being played at the regional and subregional level as prescribed in the Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa, in the 1990s, in particular where it states that "In the field of training, there is need to strengthen the existing 16 regional and subregional institutions currently

participating in the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA)".

- . The need was expressed for more involvement of the Directors of the National Statistical Services in the work of the CASD and its Sub-Committees in order to better identify national statistical needs, priorities and improve coordination.
- . There was urgent need to look into various possibilities for mobilization of adequate resources for effective coordination of statistical development at the regional level in Africa. Consequently, the statistical development process should be viewed more as one of partnership between ECA and her partners in African statistical development and less as the preserve of the ECA.
- . Some participants expressed doubts as to whether the laudable regional goals set out in the Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action were being achieved; whether the CASD was really doing what it was set up to do, i.e. "coordinate and direct the efforts being made to revitalize, rehabilitate and develop the African Statistical network and to monitor overall implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action". Participants stated that there is need to restructure the CASD. The fact that the CASD meetings are nearly always planned to run parallel to some major meetings due to resource constraints hardly allows adequate time for proper indepth discussion of issues.
- . The idea of replacing the present four CASD Sub-Committees by a CASD Technical Sub-Committee was mooted; such a Technical Sub-Committee could set-up task forces to deal with specific and cross-cutting issues and activities which would have real impact at the national level.
- . Also expressed, was the view that the bottom-line is proper monitoring of the extent and magnitude of statistical developments taking place at the national level. In this regard, there were examples of some positive developments.
- . The Framework for Monitoring Statistical Development should be reproduced in final form and sent to the African National Statistical offices for their use.
- . The CASD Secretariat in cooperation with the World Bank, Statistics Sweden, EUROSTAT, ISAE, IPC, AFRISTAT, UNSD,

etc. should commence an evaluation of the CASD and its Sub-Committees and present its report to the sixth session of the CASD in 1996.

- . The Director-General of AFRISTAT informed the CASD that AFRISTAT (the observatoire Economique et Statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne) is an international organization created by a Treaty signed in Abidjan on 21 September 1993 by the 14 African members of the franc Zone. It owes its creation to two phenomena, namely a new economic and political climate and a clearly affirmed desire for regional integration. Its objective is to foster the development of economic, social and environmental statistics in the member States and to improve their competence in this domain.

Any other business (agenda item 6)

22. There was none.

Date and Venue of the Sixth Meeting (agenda item 7)

23. The sixth meeting of the CASD was scheduled for March 1996 at ECA headquarters to coincide with the ninth session of the Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Population and Information Specialists.

The list of participants is at Annex 2(a)

CASD/Training/95/1/2

TRAINING SUB-COMMITTEE
of the
Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development

Minutes of the Third Meeting

February 6th and 7th, 1995
Luxembourg

1. Opening

1.1 The meeting was opened at 09.45 on Monday 6th February 1995 by Mr Bernard Langevin, co-chairman, who welcomed participants to Luxembourg in the name of himself and the other co-chairman Mr Tony Williams. In addition to the regular members of the sub-committee, he particularly welcomed the presence of

Dr Ajayi, Director General of the Federal Office of Statistics, Nigeria, and Chairman of CASD

Mr Eklof, of Statistics Sweden, member of the task force on Needs Assessments and Training Plans and convenor of the Data Processing sub-committee

Mr Bellon, the newly-appointed Director of CESD-Paris

Dr Woodward, ODA consultant and author of the study on training plans

Mr Bayenne, World Bank consultant and author of the report on needs assessments

1.2 Apologies were recorded from

Mr Peronnet, INSEE Paris

Mr Bush, ISPC Washington

Mr Stentzel, CDG Munich

Mr Jackson, UN Statistics Division

1.3 A list of participants is at Annex 2(b)

2. Adoption of agenda

2.1 The provisional agenda at Annex 1(a) i. was adopted without amendment.

3. Report to the sub-committee on proceedings of CASD fourth meeting

3.1 The Secretary presented the report of the fourth meeting of CASD to members of the sub-committee.

3.2 He reminded members that the fourth CASD meeting immediately followed the third meeting of the sub-committee and that a verbal presentation had been necessary. In order to assist with the minute-taking, he had provided the CASD secretariat with a written note which had been attached to the minutes of the second meeting of CASD(T) and was reproduced without amendment in the minutes of the fourth CASD.

3.3 The minutes of CASD contain the following comments:

(para 29) - During the discussion which followed, the chairman and the participants of CASD warmly congratulated the members of the sub-committee on their good work. They were particularly appreciative of the principle of self-help which had guided the work programme, and of the deadlines which the tasks had been given.

(para 30) - Regarding the action plan and the sub-committee's way of working on each action, these were accepted by the participants with three comments. Firstly, the sub-committee was urged to work at full speed on the action involving needs assessments and training strategies, because of their central importance to national statistical services. Secondly, the sub-committee was requested not to forget to evaluate the arrangements for middle level training, as stated in the third CASD meeting (paragraph 19(k) of the minutes). Thirdly, the sub-committee was urged to take into account in their studies the systems used by the different language groups in Africa, so that the most efficient approaches could be discovered.

3.4 For the record, paragraph 19(k) of the minutes of the third CASD meeting reads as follows:

"The meeting felt that the arrangements for middle level training at country level need to be evaluated. It was noted that such arrangements could be made more effective and cost efficient through an enhanced role of sub-regional level centres in their implementation."

3.5 Middle level training was stressed at many times during the meeting, and all members agreed on its importance. The Eurostat and Statistics Sweden studies (see below, para 4.3) have covered this area, as have previous ODA studies, and members asked that a presentation of the results be made at the next meeting.

3.6 The joint session of the Training and Organisation & Management sub-committees was presented to the CASD fourth meeting by Mr T Marchant, and the conclusions and recommendations of the joint report were endorsed.

4. New developments of interest to the sub-committee

4.1 Following the pattern of previous meetings, members brought to the attention of others developments in training of general interest.

4.2 In the francophone area, we heard that

- the Afristat foundation had been established with its headquarters in Bamako. Mr Diop is the first Director General. Afristat is described as an economic and statistical "observatory" for sub-saharan Africa. The mission of Afristat can be summarised as promoting the development of economic analysis, but it will be involved too with continuous training of statisticians in

member countries. Membership of Afristat is open to all sub-saharan african countries.

- the school in Kigali suffered greatly from the troubles in Rwanda. Some students have been able to recommence their studies in Dakar and Abidjan.
- a new Director has been installed in the school in Yaounde, which has resumed its operations. EC assistance as yet has not restarted.
- Mr Yattien-Amiguet has retired as Director of the school in Abidjan and was replaced from January 1st 1995 by Prof Koffi N'Guessan.

4.3 In anglophone Africa, we heard that

- the Government of Tanzania passed a bill (on African Statistics Day 1994) which established EASTC as a national institution with a regional character. This has enabled the EC project to begin, and the contracts are being finalised.
- Eurostat reported on the three statistical training needs studies it was undertaking. That covering the original ten SADC countries was completed, and is with the SADC Regional Training Council for consideration. An extension to cover South Africa (now part of SADC) was under way. A study for eastern Africa had finished, and the report was being written. The studies are intended to assist Eurostat to define its strategy for cooperation in statistical training with these parts of Africa.
- Statistics Sweden reported that a review of their assistance to the Bureau of Statistics in Tanzania had criticised training supplied through the project as too project-oriented and too ad hoc. The report will be circulated to members for information.
- ECA reported that they hope to begin working with ISAE to develop a programme on management and organisation of national statistical systems, if funding can be found to supplement the TA from ECA. They also plan to work with the Uganda NSO on in-service middle level training, using EASTC as a point of reference.
- ESAMI have extended their activities in Arusha and elsewhere to include training in such subjects as the effects of structural adjustment, interpretation of statistical data and economic management.

4.4 In lusophone Africa it was reported that

- training of trainers (a four year course) is well established at CESD-Lisbon.

- but they are not yet in a position to transfer high-level training from Lisbon into Africa.
- two short courses on descriptive statistics and household surveys have been run for middle-level statisticians, and further courses will be held soon on external trade and national accounts under the training of trainers programme.

4.5 Training for national accounts, in particular following the new revision, was raised as an issue. Statistics Sweden have run training seminars in SADC, for example, and Lisbon have included it in their training of trainers course. The national accounts task force of the UN Statistical Commission will probably focus on the production of training materials. The ECA held Working Group in english for the new SNA in 1994, and will hold one in french in 1995.

4.6 France and Eurostat are jointly developing a software package to assist in the construction of national accounts, which is currently being tested in CAR and it is hoped will be taken to other countries. The Swedes have also been developing software for national accounts, especially aimed at small countries with scattered data.

4.7 A debate on the impact of the introduction of the new SNA followed. Some participants argued strongly that the new system was not so radically different that training resources needed to be diverted into additional training. The new SNA has made conceptual changes but GDP is still at the heart of the work of a statistics office. There was sympathy for the position of the statistical offices who still needed to improve the basic data they produce, and who, given a choice between training in basic statistics and advanced national accounts, were likely to choose the former.

4.8 There was support for a suggestion that all those undergoing training should be given a session on how the data from their section or unit feeds through to the national accounts. This is similar to the introduction of modules on report writing and management into courses which otherwise cover a particular sector of statistics.

4.9 It was also suggested that regional fora might be established by the international agencies where the techniques for compiling national accounts could be discussed by African countries. The mission of Afristat covers economic analysis too.

4.10 Regarding poverty, members were informed that a new report by USAID on "Alternative survey methodologies for measuring and monitoring poverty" had been produced for the SPA Poverty and Social Policy Working Group.

5. Update on progress with action items

5.1 The secretary informed the meeting that discussion would be restricted to actions 1, 5, 6 and 9, for which papers had been received and the team leaders were present. Actions 3 and 4 would be presented by the chairman, and any immediate comments fed back to the respective team leaders. Actions 2, 8 and 10 would be held over to the next meeting.

Action 1 - Needs assessments and training plans

5.2 The sub-committee had two documents to discuss

"Focusing Statistical Training in Africa" by Mark Woodward for ODA: draft report January 1995.

"Statistical Needs Assessments and Planning - A Review of Approaches and Current Practices" by Mitik Bayenne for the World Bank: draft report January 1995.

5.3 These documents have been commissioned by the Action 1 Task Force which was set up jointly by the Training Sub-committee and the Organisation and Management Sub-committee. At a meeting in September 1994, the task force decided that more information on the subjects was required than could be provided by desk studies, and ODA and the World Bank were able to find resources for the consultancy work.

5.4 Members of the sub-committee were reminded that both reports were drafts, and would have been discussed first by the task force, had it not been for the time constraints. However, the composition of this meeting of the sub-committee had been chosen to reflect the membership of the task force, and so comments and recommendations would reflect opinions and experiences across the board.

5.5 Both consultants were congratulated by the members of the sub-committee on their excellent work. A long and detailed discussion followed, which is reported in Annex 3. Many of the comments were answered directly by the consultants: some will require editing of the reports.

5.6 The essence of the discussion on the Training report was that the ten recommendations made by the consultant were agreed, but that the experiences of other countries, particularly those in francophone and lusophone Africa, and in west Africa, needed incorporating into the report. The meeting also felt that it would be valuable for a training needs assessment study needs to be piloted somewhere in Africa.

5.7 The ten recommendations are (in summary):

- i) a needs assessment is a golden opportunity to develop a training strategy in order to avoid ad-hoc and supply-based training;
- ii) a manpower and training needs assessment should be carried out concurrently with the main needs assessment;
- iii) the training needs assessment team should contain members of the main team;

- iv) training courses currently used should be critically evaluated during the assessment;
- v) a training strategy should be formulated based on the training needs assessment study;
- vi) the national development plan should contain summary information on manpower and training requirements;
- vii) a system for evaluating training should be put into place;
- viii) promotion rules should reflect the needs assessment study and the training strategy;
- ix) the conditions and rewards of training should be clear to all;
- x) the statistical service should provide adequate management of training.

5.8 On the Needs Assessment report, there was little disagreement with the findings of the author. He had been able to cover a wide range of African experiences and these were well-summarised. But members particularly asked how this report fitted in with the Guidelines for Needs Assessments and Strategy Development produced by UNECA. It was suggested that there were three main audiences for the report:

- heads of national statistical services, who needed practical and more detailed information about carrying out needs assessments;
- non-statisticians, who needed sensitising about the role and value of needs assessments;
- external agencies, who would welcome a framework through which they could operate when designing projects of cooperation.

Members were invited to comment on these ideas.

Future work

5.9 The meeting agreed that the work will be taken forward as follows:

- i) Members who wish to make further comments, especially on detailed aspects of the reports, and examples or counter-examples based on country experiences, were asked to send these in writing to the secretary by the middle of March. These will be passed on to the consultants.
- ii) Copies of both reports will also be sent to members of the Organisation and Management sub-committee not present, together with the record of the comments made during the meeting, so that they would be able to add their thoughts.

- iii) The Bayenne report would be amended to reflect the comments made, and to incorporate sections 1 to 7 of the Woodward report.
- iv) A summary of this combined report would also be made.
- v) The Woodward report would be amended to reflect the comments made. At the same time, ways would be sought to incorporate the experiences from other parts of Africa.
- vi) An interim progress statement will be made to the fifth meeting of CASD in Addis Ababa in May.
- vii) The new reports will be circulated by September 1995 to members of both sub-committees, so that they can be discussed and finalised at the next meetings of the sub-committees.
- viii) The final reports will be presented to the sixth meeting of CASD with recommendations from both sub-committees as to how the proposals should be taken forward.

Action 3 - Survey of aid for training

5.10 Mr Williams drew the attention of members to the report submitted by Osborne Jackson showing the questionnaire he had sent to donor agencies and the consolidated responses and on behalf of members thanked Mr Jackson for his efforts.

5.11 In response to questions from members, it was confirmed that the target for the survey had always been external agencies, (rather than national statistical services) but that there had been a wish to quantify the assistance available to African statistical training too. Members appreciated the difficulty of doing this, but urged Mr Jackson to attempt to find this out.

Action 4 - Directors' opinion poll

5.12 Mr Williams summarised the situation with this survey, based on the report sent in by Mr Ching'anda, who was thanked for his efforts. He drew the attention of members to the appeal for assistance in paragraph 21 of the report.

5.13 Some members felt that the poor response so far from Directors demonstrated the difficulty of collecting information on the African situation, even through the aegis of ECA. Regarding the lusophone countries, Mr Pereira offered to assist with the collection of data. The secretary was asked to find out whether questionnaires in portuguese had been sent out.

[Secretary's note - portuguese questionnaires had not been prepared: ECA have since provided copies of the two questionnaires to Mr Pereira].

5.14 A suggestion was made that some offices might benefit from a personal visit to assist with the completion of the questionnaires. The chairman suggested that if the response rate had not improved by May, then other ways of collecting the information should be investigated. He also expressed concern that if, as it appeared, the task of completing the questionnaires had been delegated, we risked losing the personal opinion of the Directors.

Action 5 - Subsidiarity

5.15 Mr Langevin introduced his paper, and then posed the question to members of whether the subject of subsidiarity was important enough to be taken further. There was general agreement that it warranted further investigation. Mr Langevin agreed to look further into the subject, and asked other members to send him examples from their personal experience.

5.16 Members commented as follows:

- i) some guiding principles were needed, especially regarding the provision of continuous training (or in-service training). Would one answer be to set up permanent training centres in Africa, for example, for refresher courses?
- ii) although the question of "what is done where" is important, there are often practical difficulties with national governments over financial arrangements.
- iii) the liberalisation of some African countries has in many cases untied training from particular countries or institutions. Value for money was one crucial aspect of the question, and training institutions needed to market themselves.

Action 6 - Contracts of association

5.17 Dr Muba and Mr Yattien-Amiguet were congratulated on a thorough paper. They in turn thanked the Directors of STPA Centres for their assistance. Members asked for a few points of clarification and there are some factual corrections to be made in the summary of the francophone schools. The addition of temporary contracts, such as that between the NSO in Mauritania and UNDP was also proposed.

5.18 Other than these points, which will require some editing, this action is now complete.

Action 9 - Compendium of statistical training

5.19 Mr Pereira presented a paper on this topic. The subject was not an easy one, since the idea was to provide a bulletin of training opportunities which was as exhaustive as possible but at the same time quickly available and easily updated.

5.20 It was confirmed that the intention of the bulletin was to cover all courses of use to African statisticians, including those from outside the continent. Short courses were mostly done outside Africa at present, so the net had to be spread wide. It was clearly of use to focus on the future rather than the past, which again poses problems.

5.21 Members agreed that this action should continue with the intention of producing a pilot version of what such a training brochure would look like. Under action 10, the maintenance and dissemination of such a brochure will then be investigated.

6. Any other business

6.1 There was one item of other business, which was the relations between the various sub-committees, and with the main CASD. ECA, as secretariat of CASD, had asked sub-committees to consider, in advance of the next meeting of CASD,

- future prospects for the sub-committee
- proposals for the next meeting of CASD

6.2 Mr Eklof, in his capacity as convenor of the Data Processing sub-committee, felt that the work of his sub-committee was converging with that of the training sub-committee. He noted that the use of computers for dissemination and data processing training were particular areas of overlap.

6.3 The Data Processing sub-committee has undertake to produce a Status Paper which will cover three topics:

- i) current best practices for using data professing resources in producing cost-effective statistics in an African context;
- ii) an investigation into the bottlenecks which hinder the timely production of statistics;
- iii) and a statement of the central themes of statistical data processing.

6.4 Mr Marchant, as co-convenor of the Organisation and Management sub-committee, remarked that many of the sub-committees had overlapping membership and in the case of his sub-committee, only two current activities, both of which were being done jointly with the Training sub-committee. He pointed out that task forces had a limited life for a specific task, whereas sub-committees were unlimited in duration. An alternative possibility would be to have one technical sub-committee which oversaw the work of task forces, setting them up and dissolving them as required.

6.5 Prof Ajayi appreciated the debate and, speaking as chairman of CASD, said how much he had enjoyed taking part in the meeting. He was not surprised that the work of the sub-committees was converging: statistics is a cross-cutting issue and it is hard to sub-divide it into discrete sections. He saw a life for the sub-committees in the

future, but agreed that the main CASD meeting in May would no doubt discuss it further.

6.6 Mr Singh reiterated that ECA was the point of reference for CASD and regretted that the limited time available meant that the subject of coordination could not be properly debated at this meeting. It was clear that there was no time to establish a sub-committee view, and on behalf of CASD secretariat in ECA he therefore urged all members to make their personal views known as soon as possible.

7. Report to CASD fifth meeting

7.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting would form the official report to the fifth meeting of CASD, to be held in Addis Ababa on May 25th and 26th, 1995. These dates have been chosen to coincide with the Joint Conference of the IAOS and the AFSA.

8. Date of next meeting

8.1 It was agreed that the next meeting would be associated with the sixth meeting of CASD, if possible.

8.2 The meeting closed at 17.30 on Tuesday February 7th 1995.

Phil Crook
Secretary
Eurostat A-5
Batiment Jean Monnet
L-2920 LUXEMBOURG

Tel: +352 4301 33795
Fax: +352 4301 32769

AGENDA AND TIMETABLE

Monday February 6th at 09.45

1. Opening
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Report to sub-committee on proceedings of CASD fourth meeting
4. New developments of interest to the sub-committee
5. Update on progress with action items, discussion of papers, and agreement on the way forward

Action 1: Needs assessments and training plans

Tuesday February 7th at 09.30

Action 1: continued

Action 2: Survey of training schools

Action 3: Survey of aid for training

Action 4: Directors opinion poll

Action 5: Subsidiarity, as applied to statistical training

Action 6: Contracts of association

Action 8: Methods and tools

Action 9: Compendium of statistical training

Action 10: Dissemination of course information

6. Any other business
7. Report to CASD fifth meeting
8. Date of next meeting

ACTION 1 - NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND TRAINING PLANS

Discussion of the reports

1. The sub-committee had two documents to discuss

"Focusing Statistical Training in Africa" by Mark Woodward for ODA: draft report January 1995.

"Statistical Needs Assessments and Planning - A Review of Approaches and Current Practices" by Mitik Bayenne for the World Bank: draft report January 1995.

2. These documents have been commissioned by the Action 1 Task Force which was set up jointly by the Training Sub-committee and the Organisation and Management Sub-committee. At a meeting in September 1994, the task force decided that more information on the subjects was required than could be provided by desk studies, and fortunately ODA and the World Bank were able to find resources for the consultancy work.

3. Members of the sub-committee were reminded that both reports were drafts, and would have been discussed first by the task force, had it not been for the time constraints. However, the composition of this meeting of the sub-committee had been chosen to reflect the membership of the task force, and so comments and recommendations would reflect opinions and experiences across the board.

4. Both consultants were congratulated by the members of the sub-committee on their excellent work.

"Focusing Statistical Training in Africa" by Mark Woodward for ODA: draft report January 1995.

5. Mr Williams introduced this action by explaining that it was designed to explore the links between needs assessments and training strategies. The Task Force had concluded that a needs assessment is part of a strategic process which comprises various stages:

- identification and specification of user needs
- setting priorities
- reviewing the present statistical system
- preparing a statistical development plan
- reviewing constraints and needs for additional resources
- establishing training needs and strategies
- identifying needs for external assistance.

6. The articulation of user needs should take into account both the immediate and the long-term, as well as potential needs. Users should be aware of the costs and implications when being asked to prioritise their needs.

7. Turning to the report, Mr Williams explained that it had been commissioned by ODA for the benefit of CASD. During the development of the terms of reference, it had been decided that some field work in Africa would be necessary. The two countries selected were Kenya and Namibia.

8. Dr Woodward added that although examples in the text of his report therefore referred mostly to those two countries, his thinking and recommendations were based on a much wider experience which he had gained while working in Africa on EU training studies. He had also had the benefit of much useful documentation from a variety of sources.

9. Dr Woodward's recommendations are as follows:

- i) a needs assessment is a golden opportunity to develop a training strategy in order to avoid ad-hoc and supply-based training
- ii) a manpower and training needs assessment should be carried out concurrently with the main needs assessment
- iii) the training needs assessment team should contain members of the main team
- iv) training courses currently used should be critically evaluated during the assessment
- v) a training strategy should be formulated based on the training needs assessment study
- vi) the national development plan should contain summary information on manpower and training requirements
- vii) a system for evaluating training should be put into place
- viii) promotion rules should reflect the needs assessment study and the training strategy. Training awards to ensure promotion should be avoided.
- ix) the conditions and rewards of training should be clear to all
- x) the statistical service should provide adequate management of training.

10. Members were broadly in agreement with these recommendations and suggested that the task force found some way of incorporating them into the ECA

guidelines. However, it was noted that the examples in the report were drawn exclusively from anglophone eastern and southern Africa, and there was a strong feeling that experiences from other parts of Africa needed to be included.

11. Eurostat undertook to investigate how the experiences of others could best be included. In the meantime, members were urgently requested to provide information concerning countries with which they were familiar, which either supported the consultant's statements or which provided counter-examples. Experiences of good and bad training plans and training activities are also welcome.

12. Many points of detail were made during the discussion, and a version of the report will be produced taking these into account. Other members asked for clarification of particular points, which was given. The principal points made were the following:

- i) the report did not mention the role of the existing regional training centres in Africa, in particular as regards the coordination of middle-level training. This was accepted, although it was pointed out that this was also part of several other actions.
- ii) the dynamic nature of a training plan needed more emphasis. [This point was also made later about general needs assessments].
- iii) the role of the training officer was questioned. Members agreed that such a position was necessary but could be part-time, for the smaller offices. A training focal point was the essential element. The Director of the statistical office also had clear responsibilities for training.
- iv) some of the training requirements, for example evaluation of training arrangements or assistance with the selection of trainees and the evaluation of their training, could be undertaken by sub-regional training centres. This might be especially beneficial to the smaller offices.
- v) the emphasis on skills was much appreciated and endorsed by all. This was felt to be the crucial part of the report which could not be over-stated. The list of suggested skills was welcomed and some members would like to see it circulated widely for comment.
- vi) more needed to be said about the training of trainers (who are not necessarily the training officers, and who have their own needs for skills). This has to be linked to the development of training materials.
- vii) the report talked about promotion being too strongly associated with academic achievement. This led to much discussion, although some members felt that those who went on training courses needed to see clearly the benefits which would come to them as a result of that training.

viii) schemes of service were not explicitly mentioned in the report. There was agreement that they were crucial to provide the linkage between skills and career development, and in ensuring that promotion was in fact based on the acquisition of certain skills, academic and other.

ix) the point about evaluation and assessment of courses was accepted. There was no clear agreement that formal evaluation was necessary, although members did agree that some systematic evaluation would be useful and it can be done in a variety of ways.

x) the comment that training courses provided by donors were often badly coordinated and sometimes contradictory was noted, but members agreed that this is where the statistical office should work to ensure better coordination.

xi) the meeting felt that a training needs assessment should be carried out, using the recommendations, as a pilot study.

"Statistical Needs Assessments and Planning - A Review of Approaches and Current Practices" by Mitik Bayenne for the World Bank: draft report January 1995.

13. Mr Marchant introduced this paper and stressed that it was a first draft. He therefore suggested that members of the sub-committee who had comments of detail to make, particularly on the country experiences, sent them in writing to the secretary for onward transmission to the consultant. He proposed that the meeting limited itself to comments of a general nature on the first four sections.

14. Mr Bayenne, in his introductory remarks, expressed his gratitude to all those who had assisted him. His paper, though long, encompassed a variety of country experiences. He had visited Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia and Uganda and had benefited from reports of the work done in Cote d'Ivoire, Angola, Chad and Namibia, as well as from the contributions of members of the task force and others.

15. His report consisted of four sections. Section I set out the conceptual framework which was behind needs assessments. There were three main questions to be answered:

- why and for what purpose is the information required
- what kind of information will satisfy the demand
- who will provide the data and how will it be collected, processed, analysed and used.

16. The second section looks at some examples of approaches to needs assessments and summarises the points which need to be addressed when planning an assessment. These are

- the scope and coverage of the assessment

- the composition and size of the needs assessment team
- the choice of methodologies for determining the needs and users and producers
- the analysis and consolidation of the findings
- the resource implications for doing the assessment
- and a suggested time frame and schedule of activities.

17. The third section turns to the question of developing a statistical plan. After setting out the concepts and the global and specific objectives, five strategies need to be developed for:

- data collection
- data management and processing
- data analysis
- data storage, retrieval and dissemination
- institutional strengthening.

18. This will lead through to the definition of statistical outputs and objectives and the preparation of an action plan. There will then be implications for manpower development and training. [It is into this section that Dr Woodward's report will be merged].

19. The final section deals briefly with issues of institutional restructuring. The author points out that many African statistical offices are passing through a period of restructuring, or a redefinition of their role, and argues that a comprehensive needs assessment is a useful tool for this activity.

20. During the discussion that followed, there was little disagreement with the findings of the author. He had been able to cover a wide range of African experiences and these were well-summarised. Members particularly asked how this report fitted in with the Guidelines for Needs Assessments and Strategy Development (NASD) produced by UNECA and who the users of the report would be. It was suggested that there were three main audiences for the report:

- heads of national statistical services, who needed practical and more detailed information about carrying out needs assessments
- non-statisticians, who needed sensitising about the role and value of needs assessments
- external agencies, who would welcome a framework through which they could operate when designing projects of cooperation.

21. It was also stressed that this report was complementary to the NASD guidelines and was not designed to be a parallel or replacement document.

22. A main part of the debate which followed was on whether global or comprehensive needs assessments were actually necessary, either in themselves or as a prelude to restructuring. Some members argued that it is possible to restructure a statistical system without a global needs assessment: a sectoral assessment was necessary, however, for correctly targetting the users needs. Some indication of the global needs of government can be found from published documents and the statistics office could organise itself to measure and monitor government performance. Others disagreed, arguing that offices need a comprehensive study in order to make long or medium term planning possible. An official needs assessment was also extremely useful for presenting a case to government. Examples of full needs assessments are relatively scarce, however.

23. Some members warned that restructuring itself was in danger of becoming a higher priority than it would seem to deserve, and others pointed out that most documents seemed to imply that restructuring started from a blank sheet, which was far from true. The existing structures were very relevant to the future ones.

24. There was general agreement however that

- a global needs assessment is more often associated with restructuring
- a continuous or sectoral needs assessment is more often associated with fine tuning the work of the office

25. As before, points of detail were made during the discussion, and the consultant will make factual corrections to his report, including the country sections. Members asked for clarification of particular points, which was given. The other principal points made were the following:

- i) the question of who pays for statistical information is also relevant, as this might distort the demand pattern.
- ii) a needs assessment is in danger of being seen as a benchmark study, when in fact it is a dynamic document which needs to respond to changing external circumstances.
- iii) there is a big difference between the establishment of producer/user groups and their effective operation. Users need training in the use and production of statistics too, and in many cases their attitude towards statistics needs modifying. Feedback should be sought from users on a continuous basis and not just through formal structures such as national statistical committees. Members appreciated the interview method for collecting information but warned of the difficulty of actually identifying the correct person to interview.
- iv) the report should say more about the importance of prioritising user needs. Priorities are part of the system and a natural response to the conflict between demands and resources.

- v) with the advent of the new technologies there are opportunities for statistics offices to be more innovative, especially in how the information is supplied to the users. The report could say more on this topic.
- vi) the statistical offices should be seeking opportunities to widen the scope of the work they do beyond basic statistics, and to widen their customer bases beyond the basic needs of government, to the private sector and the people.
- vii) the question of who owns the needs assessment needs discussing in the report, since it is crucial in whether or not it is accepted by government and budget holders.

The way forward

26. The meeting agreed that the work will be taken forward as follows:

- i) Members who wish to make further comments, especially on detailed aspects of the reports, and examples or counter-examples based on country experiences, were asked to send these in writing to the secretary by the middle of March. These will be passed on to the consultants.
- ii) Copies of both reports will also be sent to members of the Organisation and Management sub-committee not present, together with the record of the comments made during the meeting, so that they would be able to add their thoughts.
- iii) The Bayenne report would be amended to reflect the comments made, and to incorporate sections 1 to 7 of the Woodward report.
- iv) A summary of this combined report would also be made.
- v) The Woodward report would be amended to reflect the comments made. At the same time, ways would be sought to incorporate the experiences from other parts of Africa.
- vi) An interim progress statement will be made to the fifth meeting of CASD in Addis Ababa in May.
- vii) The new reports will be circulated by September 1995 to members of both sub-committees, so that they can be discussed and finalised at the next meetings of the sub-committees.
- viii) The final reports will be presented to the sixth meeting of CASD with recommendations from both sub-committees as to how the proposals should be taken forward.

**REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE CASD SUB-COMMITTEE
ON RESEARCH, METHODS AND STANDARDS**

Introduction

The meeting was opened by the representative of UNSD, the convener of the Sub-committee. In his opening remarks, he reported on the major activity of the Sub-committee since the first meeting that was held at ECA headquarters on 25 March 1994, which was a survey on the research priorities in Africa.

The meeting adopted the following Agenda:

AGENDA

1. Opening and introduction by the representative of the United Nations Statistical Division
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Report on research priorities
4. Future activities
5. Report to CASD
6. Any other business
7. Date and venue of the next meeting

The list of participants is given in Annex 2(c)

Report on Research Priorities (agenda item 3)

The paper "Findings of a survey among national statistical offices/agencies on statistical research activities" was introduced by the representative of UNSD. It was noted that a questionnaire had been sent to a total of 16 organizations/ institutions and 42 national statistical offices. The response rate was very low, only 24 completed questionnaires had been received, 6 from

organizations/institutions and 18 from national statistical offices.

The responses indicated that:

- There were no clear priorities in the area of research;
- Areas considered important under statistical methods were data analysis, data processing, statistical frames and sample selection, maintenance of registers and data dissemination;
- Areas considered very important under statistical standards were development of standard classifications, documentation standards and professional/ethical standards.

Regarding statistical data processing it was considered that computer supported data editing and validation as well as the development of methods for electronic data interchange were especially important. Fourteen of the 24 respondents indicated that they had archives for their research and methodology findings and of these 13 disseminated their findings through publications, bulletins and newsletters.

The discussion focused on the response rate, the content of the questionnaire, the analysis of the responses and dissemination of the results.

The response rate was considered low and therefore did not give a strong basis for the Sub-committee to define a strategy or develop action programmes. However, some participants expressed the opinion that the survey still gave some indication of priority areas. The meeting considered the use of UNDP field offices as well as personal contact through missions of members of the Sub-committee to improve the response rate.

It was agreed that a small group of members, namely UNSD, ECA and ISAE should draw up a simple questionnaire which would be circulated among members and used to elicit more information on research activities of countries that did not respond. This questionnaire should be used by Sub-committee members for personal interviews when on mission. The results of this inquiry will supplement those of the main survey.

It was decided that the report on the survey should be distributed to countries and organizations that responded and also to members of the Sub-committee.

Some participants wanted to know whether the results of the September 1993 inquiry by the United Nations Statistical Division about the stock of existing documents and publications in the field of methods, research and standards have been published.

A suggestion was made that research activities should include monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Statistical offices should be in a position to respond to development priorities.

Future activities (agenda item 4)

Some Sub-committee members presented brief reports on their research activities and the dissemination of results. It was agreed that dissemination of research results, as well as contents of archives, including mission reports and unpublished papers, was important. Existing newsletters, journals, bulletins, etc, should be used. The UNSD offered to disseminate any materials received by the office.

Restructuring of sub-committees (agenda item 5)

Given that many of the CASD members wished to participate in the deliberations of more than one sub-committee, a suggestion was made to replace the four sub-committees with one technical committee; and task forces could be constituted for specific projects. A contrary view was expressed to the effect that a proposal for a change in the structure should be preceded by an assessment of the achievement of the objectives of the sub-committees.

Date and venue of the next meeting (agenda item 7)

The next meeting was proposed for March 1996, to coincide with the period of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians, Population and Information Specialists.

**REPORT OF THE THIRD MEETING OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE
ON DATA PROCESSING**

Introduction

During the meeting of the *Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development, CASD*, in Nairobi November 24-25, 1992, it was proposed to constitute a number of sub-committees focusing on specific aspects of statistical development in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s. A sub-committee on *Data Processing* was suggested and formed.

The first meeting of the sub-committee was convened in Stockholm by *Statistics Sweden* on June 1-2, 1993. On this occasion the *Terms of Reference* for the sub-committee were laid out and accepted.

The second meeting was held in conjunction with the main *CASD* meeting in Addis Ababa on March 17-18, 1994.

Membership in the sub-committee is drawn from the main *CASD* committee and has varied over the first two years of activity. *Statistics Sweden* has been acting as convener during the period. It has also been decided that the sub-committee should meet once a year.

The meeting adopted the following agenda:

AGENDA

Opening session

- . Opening statement
- . Election of chairperson
- . Adoption of the agenda

Review of the current situation in statistical data processing

- . Report from ECA
- . Country reports
- . Regional activities
- . Update on training activities

Statistical EDP capacity and inventory of the related
databases in African draft questionnaire

Current work on a position paper

Review of the current work programme and of the terms of reference

Future activities and division of responsibilities

Report to the CASD main committee

Scheduling of future meetings

Any other matters

Closure

The list of participants is given in Annex 2(d).

Deliberations of the meeting

Opening session

Dr. Jan A. Eklöf, Statistics Sweden, was unanimously elected to chair the meeting. The agenda was proposed and adopted without any amendment. Dr. Eklöf in his opening speech stressed that the ultimate goals of *cost efficiency*, establishing *reliable national statistical databases*, improving *dissemination procedures*, employing *standards in data processing* and finally *user orientation* should be pursued. He also mentioned the very rapid changes in the data processing environment since the committee was established which must be taken into account in defining future activities. Changing from text-based software to software employing GUI's (e.g. Microsoft Windows or others) should be promoted. Also the new techniques for sharing information on national, regional and international level through large computer networks must be recognized. He acknowledged the work done so far within the fields of the sub-committee, i.e. establishing the biennial EDP survey, the efforts made to identify positive EDP examples as well as innovative systems solutions and finally the training activities such as the ECA workshop in 1994.

Finally Dr. Eklöf questioned the role of the CASD sub-committees in the future. The most important issues should be clearly defined, making it possible to set up specific "task forces" with limited life spans. Furthermore he recommended establishing ECA as a "clearing-house" for all administrative matters, e.g. copying and distributing reports.

Report from ECA

A representative from the ECA described the activities leading to a software inventory. There is now a report available from the ECA covering the November 1994 workshop. A lot of work is done in order to organise a *sub-Saharan transport database* together with the *World Bank*. These activities are funded by the UNDP. The proceedings from the closing seminar could be provided. Finally he described how the multi-sectoral database now resident on a HP computer will be changed for a new system resident on a more suitable platform.

Some questions were raised on how these activities were related to the work of the sub-committee and how this information could be used.

Country reports and regional activities

A representative from the Data Processing Department with the Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority gave a brief description of on-going surveys undertaken by the agency. She told the committee that the CSA was utilising a HP mini-computer for most of the work, using e.g. the UN statistical package IMPS, even if subject matter departments had their own limited numbers of computers. She stressed the need for continuous training.

The representatives from the *Central Statistical Service, South Africa* mentioned that most of the data processing was centralised and organised around an *IBM* mainframe. The software package *SAS* was heavily used on both the mainframe and on the PCs for data capture, editing and tabulation. Many of the data processing systems were menu-driven through applications written in the *SAS* module *SAS/AF*. Some *GIS* systems were locally designed. Now work was intensified on establishing enumeration area boundaries for the next census. The *CSS* was connected to *Internet* and using the latest techniques for the PC environment.

The Director-General, *Federal Office of Statistics, Nigeria* described how decentralized data processing worked. Now statisticians get more and more involved. Data are mainly residing

on diskettes. Software used were, e.g. *SAS*, *ISSA*, *IMPS* and *Harvard Graphics*. The problems facing the agency today relate mostly to management and training.

The representative from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) briefed the audience on the regional EDP-activities within the Community. One of the important issues regards implementing standards nationwide, another deals with the Regional Training Centre. SADC is connected to *Internet* and using a PC LAN within the *Secretariat*.

The representative from *Makerere University* reported on different training activities. Statistical software is important, e.g. *SAS* and *SPSS*, but they at the same time introduce financing problems.

The EDP inventory questionnaire

The draft questionnaire on statistical EDP capacity and inventory of related databases was discussed. One participant wanted to include questions on local conditions, e.g. vendors available, price levels, training institutes and maintenance agreements. He also wanted to assess the statistical quality of the databases, and questioned the overall quality of the questionnaire results due to the high non-response rate. The discussions ended in a request from a representative from *ECA* to the participants to give their proposals no later than June 15 if they were to be regarded in the final questionnaire.

Terms of Reference

It was decided that a position paper stating the revised *Terms of Reference* should be worked out and presented by the end of 1995. This work should be done through a special task force comprising members from the convener *Statistics Sweden*, *ECA*, sub-regional agencies and national statistical agencies.

Future meeting.

It was decided to hold the next sub-committee meeting in conjunction with the *CASD* meeting in Addis Ababa, scheduled for March 1996.

Report to the CASD meeting. Conclusions and recommendations.

In view of the *Terms of Reference* of the sub-committee (also given here-under) the meeting adopted the following conclusions and recommendations to be reported to the main CASD committee:

1. The *ECA Survey of the EDP capacity* in the region will focus on the following features of the Information Technology (IT) of particular reference to the region;
 - Structural aspects of the EPD organizations (i.e. centralization/decentralization, LANs, client-server operations, EDP experts/Subject matter experts etc.);
 - Hardware/software issues including obsolescence, servicing, networking, availability of local market place etc.;
 - Management of data processing operations including training and upgrading of skills etc;
 - Primary/secondary usage of data, creation of data bases and archives and other access networks including Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), standards communications and the related infrastructure;
 - Data dissemination and distribution, the technical tools products as well as the related policies (including legal aspects).
2. The draft questionnaire of the *ECA survey* was distributed to the meeting and the members were requested to furnish all comments and ideas to the *ECA* representative by 15 June 1995.
3. The resulting questionnaire will be dispatched to the relevant focal points in all the member states.
4. *ECA* will produce the *Directory of the EDP capacity in Africa* in the last quarter of 1995, while a Position Paper will be produced by a special task force with representatives from the convener, *ECA*, sub-regional agencies and national statistical agencies. The intention is to have this ready for circulation during the first quarter of 1996, i.e. prior to the fourth meeting of the sub-committee planned for March 1996.

5. Due to the limited resources, at the disposal of the sub-committee, it was agreed that the group will concentrate its future activities around the *ECA* survey. However, efforts will continue in the direction of inter-country experience exchanges, creation of appropriate groups and focal points in the member states and to strengthen technical contacts of the group with the rest of the world through relevant fora. The following areas were identified as priority concerns, and are re-emphasized below:

- The sub-committee recognized that this group is to serve as the platform for coordination and harmonization of statistical data processing activities and developments in the region.
- The sub-committee recognises that the biennial survey of statistical EDP capacities, carried out by *ECA* is an important step in establishing a bench-mark situation in the region. However, due to the rapid changes in IT, contents, frequency and methods of data collection of this survey should be periodically reviewed.
- The sub-committee agreed that development and implementation of norms and standards relating to statistical data processing should be promoted so that easy data exchange between national, regional and international sources and systems can be attained.
- The group recognizes the importance of keeping abreast of IT developments, including development relating to Electronic Data Interchange (*EDI*). Standards for statistics matters were considered of relevance to the sub-committee's activities. In this respect the sub-committee fully endorses the views that a task force comprising i.e. *ECA*, *OAU*, sub-regional agencies and one or two of the technologically advanced states in the region to be established. It will look at the ways and means of adoption of *UN/EDIFACT* standards and establishment of a regional board in the region.
- The sub-committee recognizes the importance of effective dissemination of processed statistics in forms and times requested by the users, consequently efforts should be made regarding exploring of relevant dissemination tools and modes.

6. Additional funding and mobilization of human resources have to be sought for the above activities.

**REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS**

The third meeting of the Sub-committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems was held at ECA headquarters on 25 May 1995. The meeting was co-chaired by one representative each of UNECA and the World Bank as joint conveners of the Sub-committee.

The meeting adopted the following agenda:

Agenda

- 1) Opening and introduction by representatives of UNECA and the World Bank
- 2) Adoption of the agenda
- 3) Progress report on Needs Assessment and Strategy Development exercises
- 4) Report on Pilot Analysis of the Regional Survey on Statistical Organization and Training, 1994
- 5) Review of Sub-committee Membership and Operating Procedures
- 6) Future work programme
- 7) Any other business
- 8) Date and venue of the next meeting

The list of participants is given in Annex 2(e)

The meeting was attended by the representatives of the following member States of the Economic Commission for Africa: Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Nigeria and Zambia. There were representatives from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Statistics Norway, Statistics Sweden, International Programs Centre-United States Bureau of the Census, AFRISTAT/Mali, Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques (INSEE), and Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE) Makerere University.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations (FAO) the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) were also represented.

**Progress report on Needs Assessment and Strategy
Development Exercises (agenda item 3)**

For the discussion on this agenda item the Sub-committee had before it a report entitled: Statistical Needs Assessment and Planning - A Review of Approaches and Current Practices by Mitik Beyene, Consultant to the World Bank Africa Technical Department (AFTHR). In introducing the report, the representative of the World Bank recalled that it was one of the two activities commissioned by the 1994 joint session of the Sub-committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems and the Sub-committee on Training; the other action being to Survey Directors of National Statistical Offices (see agenda item 4)

In addition, the representative informed the meeting that the United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration (ODA) had financed a companion study by a consultant, on: Focusing Statistical Training in Africa. The Sub-committee took note of the report but did not discuss it as no representative from the ODA was present at the meeting.

With regard to the report on Needs Assessment and Strategy Development exercises, the representative stated that it was an attempt at further expansion and development of the CASD Guidelines for Needs Assessment and Strategy Development (NASD). The Sub-committee was informed that the document had been presented to and discussed at the 3rd meeting of the CASD Sub-committee on Training held at the Statistical Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, on 6-7 February, 1995.

The following were among the issues raised with regard to the report during the Luxembourg meeting:

- i) The purpose of the report;
- ii) The target groups;
- iii) The merits and demerits of a global vis-a-vis a sectoral NASD exercise

With regard to:

- i) It was agreed that the purpose of the report was to attempt to expand and further develop existing knowledge on the subject of NASD, as well as document best practices and methods as lessons for identifying training needs;
- ii) The primary target groups were the heads of National Statistical Office and external agencies which could find the exercise a useful framework for technical cooperation and assistance;
- iii) The report should not be prescriptive; that while a global NASD creates a framework, sectoral NASD fine-tunes needs.

The ensuing discussion during the present meeting highlighted the following issues and comments which will, as far as possible, be incorporated into the next version of the document:

- . The purpose of the report: The Addis Ababa Plan of Action has underlined the importance of Needs Assessments and Strategy Development as a key element in the process of strengthening national statistical capacity. The purpose of the report is to build on from the Guidelines issued two years ago by drawing on recent experiences of countries that have attempted such an exercise. There has been considerable evolution in thinking on the issue of NASDs in the light of such experiences, and it is considered important that this be documented and that lessons be drawn from those experiences.
- . Target audience: While the main users are expected to be the heads of national statistical services, the report is also intended to be used by non-statisticians needing information on how to improve the availability of statistics, and by external agencies who should be encouraged to use the results of an NASD to channel their support to national statistical development.
- . Whose needs? While the document stresses the fact that national needs should take priority over those of outside users, it has not put sufficient emphasis on meeting the needs of other non-governmental national users (private sector, university and NGO sectors)
- . Global versus sectoral approaches to needs assessments: While the Addis Ababa Plan of Action originally saw the NASD in terms of a global review of all facets of a national

statistical service, there have been recent experiences in which a sector-by-sector approach was used. The current document should not be too prescriptive on this issue and should merely point to the fact that both approaches are possible and that both have been successfully applied.

- . One-shot versus continuous assessment of needs: There is a danger that an NASD is seen as a one-shot exercise. This would be a mistake. The document should therefore stress the need for continuous monitoring of needs, possibly through the establishment of some form of statistical council or other user/supplier arrangement.
- . The document proposes the use of questionnaires as a vehicle for determining user and supplier needs. While this was considered acceptable, the authors of the document were nevertheless cautioned against proposing this as the only vehicle.
- . Statistical needs should be prioritised as resources are limited. However, the need to make choices should not lead to lopsided statistical production by the national statistical service.
- . Other issues raised were: the need for more interaction among data users and producers; that depending on the local situation, the needs assessment team could be enlarged beyond five members; that every care should be taken to prevent the NASD becoming a mere theoretical exercise. Further, it was suggested that national statistical offices should take on more activities in the area of forecasting and that there was need for additional training programmes in this area.

Finally, the representative of the World Bank informed the Sub-committee that further comments/suggestions, in particular as regards practical country experiences with regard to NASD which could improve and enrich the report would be appreciated. A revised version of the report would be circulated to members of the joint Sub-committee for further review by September 1995, discussed during the fourth meeting of the Sub-committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems also in September and thereafter a final report prepared for presentation to the 6th meeting of the CASD in 1996.

**Report on the Pilot Analysis of the Survey of Statistical
Organisation and Training, 1994 (agenda item 4)**

The agenda item was presented on the basis of two documents: "Report on Pilot Analysis of the Regional Survey of Statistical Organisation and Training, 1994" and "Report on Pilot Analysis of the Regional Survey of Statistical Organisation and Training, 1994: Country tables". The objectives of this action was to survey Directors of National Statistical Office in order to find out:

- (a) their opinions of the quantity, quality and relevance of training available to them to meet their training needs;
- (b) the organisational relationship between various parts of their National Statistical Systems.

A task force which was to be lead by the CASD Secretariat, ECA, was established for this action.

A draft questionnaire was prepared and sent out to Task Force members in June 1994. Comments were received and incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. The English version of the questionnaire was sent out at the end of July 1994 while the French version was sent out mid-August 1994. Deadlines were set for the return of the questionnaires. Questionnaires were not sent to Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia due to civil strife in those countries at the time. By the end of March 1995 14 out of 49 countries which were surveyed had responded (response rate 28.6 per cent). A summary of the survey results was presented covering responses from Directors of Central Statistical Office and Heads of Statistical Unit located outside the CSOs.

In the discussion which ensued, participants raised the issue of whether it would be worth the extra effort to try to increase the response rate or whether there was sufficient information that could be extracted from the existing replies. Participants felt that although the existing replies could not be regarded as statistically significant, those replies could provide useful information if treated more as case studies. Some participants mentioned problems in the definition of a Statistical Unit within the National Statistical System of each country. One proposal was to get UNDP country offices to receive and follow-up responses to questionnaires. Participants felt that undue reliance had been put on the postal survey method which is known to have limitations. It was suggested that other methods to supplement the postal method could have been used, such as the interview technique.

It was observed that while the CSOs are collecting data from various survey units in their respective countries they themselves were not cooperating in completing questionnaires sent to them. Other participants suggested a reduction in the work involved in completing the questionnaire by, for example, requesting information on professional, statistical and data processing staff only and leaving out the support staff. Reducing the size of the questionnaire could help to increase the response rate. It was proposed that countries which have so far not responded be asked to respond and that the responses be reviewed carefully.

This survey was considered to be a more comprehensive exercise than the SADC survey in that it takes on a regional dimension unlike the SADC one which is subregional. However, the study should draw on the lessons of other similar studies. Also, it should be further circulated for comments and observations. It was emphasized that the report is a pilot analysis and that it was foreseen that further work will be needed before production of a final report.

Under training, one participant proposed that the survey questionnaire could have included questions on: the length of stay of staff after training; level of teachers in the training institutions; location of training institutions both inside and outside of Africa; and the quality of work accomplished in the training institutions. On forecast of trainees in the next five years, a participant observed that profiles for the English and French-speaking countries were different and as such this could affect indicated numbers of trainees for the language groups. Differences were also noted in the number of research institutions existing in the countries covered by the two language groups.

It was observed that staffing figures provided by two countries could not be fully grasped and appeared not to reflect reality; this observation could also apply to figures supplied by some other countries. It was also not clear how training needs were estimated, whether on the basis of numbers that could be recruited or by use of another method. Further, it was not clear how training needs for the private sector, during the next five years, were compiled in each country.

Participants raised the issues of why the survey addressed the two areas: Statistical Organisation; and Training in one questionnaire. It was explained that the joint meeting of Sub-Committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems and the Sub-Committee on Training requested that the two areas be studied in the opinion poll, hence it was felt logical, in view of time constraints and the fact that the two areas are closely related, to address them in one survey.

Despite the fact that the results of the survey were of pilot nature, some participants indicated that "boxes" and descriptive illustrations could be extracted from it and be put in the Needs Assessment document which was prepared by the World Bank consultant.

Some participants questioned the scope and content of the survey, stating that collaboration with other institutions which have undertaken similar surveys, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), appeared to be missing and that this could introduce duplicative efforts between institutions. Note was made of the fact that the SADC study unlike the present one had been undertaken by a team of full-term consultants. It was also stated that access to similar past surveys could serve to crosscheck and enrich the results of the present study. It was explained that the scope and content of the survey was dictated by the mandate provided in the objectives of the survey. Regarding the content of the survey, relevant items which could explain the behaviour of certain characteristics were included in the questionnaires.

Review of Sub-committee Membership and Operating Procedures (agenda item 5)

Because of the time constraints and the possibility of a full discussion of the issue of CASD and its Sub-committees membership and operating procedures at the resumed plenary session of the CASD, this agenda item was not discussed.

Future work programme (agenda item 6)

Under the agenda item, it was observed that there was need for improvement in the management and organization of national statistical systems, and thus for management training. It was suggested that the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) centres should address this issue within their training programmes. The representative of the Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE) informed the meeting that ISAE had plans to start management training seminars and to this end the support of the Sub-committee as well as other partners in African statistical development was vital.

After an observation that the Sub-committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems and the Sub-committee on

Training have been working jointly for sometime now, it was suggested that it might be a good idea to conclude such joint activities by the 6th meeting of the CASD which could receive a report on them.

The future work programme of the Sub-committee up to its next meeting as agreed, is as follows:

- i) Further improvement to and finalization of the report on Needs Assessment and Strategy Development exercises;
- ii) Further development and finalization of the Analysis of the Regional Survey on Statistical Organization and Training, 1994;
- iii) Support to the ISAE management training seminars;
- iv) Support to African countries in the development of appropriate methods for data access and dissemination.

Any other business (agenda item 7)

One delegate wanted to know why the status of the ECA Statistics Programme had been changed from the level of a division to one of a section within a division. In reply, it was stated that the Sub-committee was of the view that there was a need for a strong statistical programme at the Commission.

Date and venue of the next meeting

It was proposed that the next meeting of the Sub-committee be held shortly after the circulation in September 1995 of the revised report on Needs Assessment and Strategy Development exercises, i.e. October 1995 and preferably in Africa. The co-conveners of the Sub-committee should work out the details and inform the membership as soon as possible.

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON
AFRICAN STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (CASD)**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>Organization/ Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel No.</u>
Central Statistics Office, Botswana	Batho Christopher Molomo	Deputy Gov't Statistician	35 22 01
Institut national de la statistique et de la Démographie Burkina Faso	Toro Honoré Djerma	Directeur général	
Ministère de l'économie, du Plan et Coopération Rep. Centrafricaine	Didier Sokony	Directeur général	236 61 03 90
International Labour Organization (ILO) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Knop R.	Senior Labour Statistics Specialist	(251-1) 51 36 33
Ministère du Plan Rep. Centrafricaine	Paul-Théodore Mbaguia	Coordonnateur Project DSAD	(236) 61 03 90
	Ahmat Adam	Chargé de la méthodologie	(236) 61 77 92
Ministère de l'économie et du Commerce-Djibouti	Ousmane Baldé	Conseiller Technique	(253) 35 58 92
Central Statistical Authority Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Abdulah Hassen	General Manager	
	Woobit Assefa	Head, Data Processing Department	
Bureau of Statistics Maseru, Lesotho	MPHO Florence Morojele	Director	+226 310177

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON
AFRICAN STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (CASD)
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)**

<u>Organization/ Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel No.</u>
Federal office of Statistics Lagos, Nigeria	O.O. Ajayi	Director General Chairman of CASD	(234-1) 263 50 77
Central Statistical Service, Pretoria South Africa	A.P.T. Du Toit	Director	(012) 31 08 504
	Piet Alberts	Deputy Director	(012) 31 08 504
	M. Koekemoer	Deputy Director	(012) 31 08 332
	Victor Coetzee	Principal Statistics Advisor	(012) 310 8500
Central Statistical Office Lusaka, Zambia	David Diangano	Director	260 1 250195
Organization of African Unity (OAU) Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Hassan W. Elhassan	Chief, Research, Planning and Statistics Section	(251 1) 51 30 36
	Tarana Loumabéka	Economist/Statistician	
Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gaborone, Botswana	E.D.M. Odirile	Statistician	(267) 372848
Observatoire économique et statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne (AFRISTAT) s/c DIAL Paris, France	Lamine Diop	Directeur général	(331) 42 08 81 60
Statistics Norway Oslo, Norway	Ib Thomsen	Director of Research	(47) 22 86 4988

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON
AFRICAN STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (CASD)
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)**

<u>Organization/ Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel No.</u>
Statistics Sweden Stockholm, Sweden	Jan A. Eklöf	Chief Statistical Advisor	(468) 783 4199
	Sten Bäcklund	Senior Statistician and EDP adviser	(468) 783 4094
International Programs Center (IPC) Bureau of the Census Washington, USA	Robert D. Bush	Chief, Technical Assistance Staff	(301) 457-30 33
Banque Africaine de développement (BAD) Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	Andre Cyprien Portella	Statisticien/Economiste principal	(225) 20 49 48
Institut national de la statistique BPV55 Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	Lago Appo. Bouabre	Sous Directeur	(225) 21 44 01
	Ouattara Idrissa James	Sous Directeur	(225) 21 44 01
Institute of Statistics and Applied Economies (ISAE) Makerere University Kampala, Uganda	James P.M. Ntozi	Director	(256) 41 53 07 56
Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre (EASTC)-Tanzania	S.T. Mwisomba	Lecturer	41 576 TASTAT T2
Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE) Paris, France	Philippe Brion	Chef de la division "études et méthodes statistiques pour le développement"	(33-1)41-17-66-52

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON
AFRICAN STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (CASD)
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)**

<u>Organization/ Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel No.</u>
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) New York, USA	D. Sala-Diakanda	Regional Coordinator for Population Office, ECA Cabinet Office	251-1-51-44-16
	Kourtoum Nacro	Programme Officer, Africa Division	(212) 297-4901
The World Bank Washington, D.C. USA	Tim Marchant	Senior Economist/Statistician	(202) 477-2900
	Robert Ngong	Senior Statistician	(202) 477-2900
	Bahjat Achikbache	Senior Statistician	(202) 477 2900
International Monetary Fund (IMF) Washington, USA	Roger Pownall	Advisor	(1-202) 623-6460
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Jérôme Ahouanmenou	UNDP Representative to OAU and Chief, Liaison Office with ECA	251-1-51-59-19
	Tafesse Takele	Programme Assistant	
	Graham Chipande	Senior Country Economist	
	Caleb Tamwesigire	JPO, UNDP/RLO	
United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	F. Ngopya	Joint FAO/ECA Statistician	251-1-51-44-16

**FIFTH MEETING OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON
AFRICAN STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT (CASD)**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)

<u>Organization/ Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel No.</u>
United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) New York, USA	Osborne Jackson	Deputy Director	Fax: (1-212) 963 9851
	Grace Bediako	Technical Adviser	Fax: (1-212) 963 1940
	Margaret Mbogoni	Statistician	Fax: (1-212) 963 1940
ECA Statistics Division	A.E. Cummings-Palmer	Officer-in-Charge	Fax: (251-1) 51 05 12
	K.K. Bockor	CASD Secretary	
	A.K. Amelewonou		
	E.F. Ching'anda		
	R. Rakotobe		
	A.M. Farazi		
ECA Multidisciplinary Regional Advisory Group (ECA-MRAG)	A. Ngwako		
	Parmeet Singh	Regional Adviser on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems	
Absent with apologies			
CESD Lisbon	Jorge Alves Pereira	Director	Fax: 38 70 392 Tel: 38 70 526
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Lusaka, Zambia	Bingu Wa Mutharika	Secretary General	Fax: 260-1-225107/227318 Tel: 260-1-229725/29

<u>Organization/ Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel No.</u>
Commonwealth Secretariat management and Training Division London, United Kingdom	Mohan Kaul	Director	Fax: 0171-930 0027 Tel: 0171-839 3411
Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) Lagos, Nigeria	Boubacar Ba	Deputy Executive Secretary	
Office statistique des Communautes européennes (EUROSTAT) Luxembourg	Bernard Langevin	Head of Divsion A5	Fax: (352) 4301-32594
Overseas Development Administration (ODA) London, United Kingdom	Tony Williams	Chief Statistician	Fax: 0171-917 0719 Tel: 0171-917 0396
Statistics Canada Ottawa, Canada	Ivan P.Fellegi	Chief Statistician	

CASD(Training) sub-committee

Co-chairmen

Mr Bernard LANGEVIN
Head of Division

Eurostat A-5
Batiment Jean Monnet
L-2920 LUXEMBOURG

Tel: +352 4301 33203
Fax: +352 4301 32769

Mr Tony WILLIAMS
Chief Statistician

Statistics Department
Overseas Development Administration
94 Victoria Street
LONDON SW1E 5JL
UK

Tel: +44 171 917 0396
Fax: +44 171 917 0719

Participants

Mr Parmeet SINGH
Regional Adviser MRAG

United Nations Economic Commission for
Africa (UNECA)
PO Box 3001
ADDIS ABABA
ETHIOPIA

Tel: +251 1 51 72 00
Fax: +251 1 51 44 16

Mr Lamine DIOP
Director General

AFRISTAT
DIAL
14 Bld Saint Martin
F-75010
PARIS
FRANCE

Tel: +33 1 42 08 33 88
Fax: +33 1 42 08 81 60

Mr Tim MARCHANT
Senior Poverty
Economist/Statistician

Human Resources Division
Africa Technical Department
The World Bank
1818 H St NW
WASHINGTON DC 20433
USA

Tel: +1 202 473 4721
Fax: +1 202 477 2900

Dr Vitalis MUBA
Acting Director

Eastern Africa Statistical Training Centre
(EASTC)
PO Box 35103
DAR ES SALAAM
TANZANIA

Tel: +255 51 43052
Fax: +255 51 43053

Mr Jorge PEREIRA
Director Interno

CESD-Lisbon
Travesa Estevao Pinto
1000 LISBON
PORTUGAL

Tel: +351 1 387 05 26
Fax: +351 1 387 03 92

Mr Francois YATTIEN-AMIGUET
Ecole Nationale Supérieure de Statistique
et d'Economie Appliquée (ENSEA)
08 BP 3
ABIDJAN 08
COTE D'IVOIRE

Tel: +225 44 08 40
Fax: +225 44 39 88

Mr Mohamed LEMINE
Directeur

Direction de la Statistique et de la
Comptabilité Nationale
Ministère du Plan et de l'Aménagement
du Territoire
BP 240
NOUAKCHOTT
MAURITANIE

Tel: +222 2 539 26
Fax: +222 2 551 70

Mr David DIANGAMO
Director

Central Statistical Office
PO Box 31908
LUSAKA
ZAMBIA

Tel: +260 1 22 76 49
Fax: +260 1 25 01 95

Absent with apologies

Mr Michel PERONNET

INSEE
8 Bld Adolphe Pinard
F-75675
PARIS CEDEX 14
FRANCE

Tel: +33 1 41 17 53 19
Fax: +33 1 41 17 66 44

Mr Robert BUSH
Chief, Technical Assistance
Staff

International Statistical Programs Center
(ISPC)
US Bureau of Census
Washington Plaza
WASHINGTON DC 20233-8860
USA

Tel: +1 301 457 1444
Fax: +1 301 457 3033

Mr Dieter STENTZEL
Director

Munich Centre for Advanced Training in
Applied Statistics
Pfalzer-Wald-Strasse 2
D-8000 MUNICH 90
GERMANY

Tel: +49 89 68 98 70
Fax: +49 89 68 05 297

Mr Osborne JACKSON
Chief, Industry and
Prices Branch

UN Statistics Division
United Nations
NEW YORK
NY 10017
USA

Tel: +1 212 963 4583
Fax: +1 212 963 1940

Invited

Mr Jan EKLOF

Statistics Sweden
S-115 81 STOCKHOLM
SWEDEN

Tel: +46 8 783 4352

Fax: +46 8 783 4791

Dr O O AJAYI
Director General

Federal Office of Statistics
36-38 Broad Street
LAGOS
NIGERIA

Tel: +234 1 26 350 81

Fax: +234 1 26 350 77

Mr Andre BELLON
Directeur

CESD-Paris
3 Avenue Pierre Larousse
F-92241 MALAKOFF Cedex
FRANCE

Tel: + 33 1 41 17 51 48

Fax: + 33 1 41 17 64 80

Consultants

Dr Mark WOODWARD

Mr Mitik BAYENNE

Secretary

Mr Phil CROOK

Eurostat A-5
Batiment Jean Monnet
L-2920 LUXEMBOURG

Tel: +352 4301 33795

Fax: +352 4301 32769

SUB-COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH, METHODS AND STANDARDS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>Organization/Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel. No.</u>
Central Statistics Office- Botswana	Batho Christopher Molomo	Deputy Gov't Statistician	Fax: 35 22 01 Tel.: 35 22 00
Institut national de la statistique et de la Démographie Burkina Faso	Toro Honoré Djerma	Directeur Général	Fax: 226-310760 Tel.: 226-310760
Ministère de l'économie et du Commerce Djibouti	Ousmane Baldé	Conseiller Technique	Fax: (253) 35 58 92 Tel.: (253) 35 32 53 35 73 21
Institut national de la statistique BPV55 Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire	Lago Appo. Bouabre	Sous Directeur	Fax: (225) 21 44 01 Tel.: (225) 21 05 38
Bureau of Statistics Maseru, Lesotho	M.F. Florence Morojele	Director	Fax: +226 31 01 77 +226 32 38 52
Central Statistical Service South Africa	A.P.T Du Toit M. Koekemoer	Director Deputy Director	Fax: (012) 31 08 504 Tel.: (012) 31 08 075 Fax: (012) 31 08 332 Tel.: (012) 31 08 283
OAU Addis Ababa	Hassan W. Elhassan	Chief Resaearch, Planning and Statistics Section	Fax: (251-1) 51 26 22 Tel.: (251-1) 51 27 03

**SUB-COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH, METHODS AND STANDARDS
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)**

<u>Organization/Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel. No.</u>
Banque Africaine de développement (BAD) Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	Andre Cyprien Portella	Statisticien/Economiste principal	Fax: (225) 20 49 48 Tel.: (225) 20 49 06
Statistics Norway Oslo, Norway	Ib Thomsen	Director of Research	Fax: (47) 22 86 4988 Tel.: (47) 22 86 4654
INSEE Paris, France	Philippe Brion	Chef de la division "études et méthodes statistiques pour le développement".	Fax: 33-1-41-17-66-52 Tel.: 33-1-41-17-53-13
EASTC-Tanzania	S.T Mwisomba	Lecturer	Fax: 225-51-43053 Tel.: 225-51-43053
ISAE Makerere University Kampala, Uganda	James P.M. Ntozi	Director	Fax: (256) 41530756 Tel.: (256) 41540409
The World Bank Washington, D.C USA	Tim Marchant	Senior Economist/Statistician	Fax: (202) 477 2900 Tel.: (202) 473 4721
International Monetary Fund (IMF) Washington, USA	Roger Pownall	Advisor	Fax: (1-202)623-6460 Tel.: (1-202)623-7727
ILO Addis Ababa	Knop R.	Senior Labour Statistics Specialist	Fax: (251-1)51 36 33 Tel.: (251-1)51 16 96

SUB-COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH, METHODS AND STANDARDS

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)

<u>Organization/Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax/Tel. No.</u>
FAO	Ngopya	Joint FAO/ECA Statistician	Fax: (251-1)51 44 16 Tel.: (251-1)71 13 81
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Graham Chipande	Senior Country Economist	Fax: (251-1) 51 45 99 Tel.: (251-1) 51 51 77
	Caleb Tanwesigire	JPO, UNDP/RLO	Fax: (251-1) 51 25 99 Tel. (251-1) 51 59 19
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) New York, USA	D.Sala-Diakanda	Regional Coordinator for Population Office, ECA Cabinet Office	Fax: (251-1)51 44 16 Tel.: (251-1)51 72 00 Ext. 783
ECA Statistics Division	A.E. Cummings-Palmer	Officer-in-Charge	Fax: (225-1)51 05 12
	K.K. Bockor	CASD Secretary	
	A.K. Amelewonou		
ECA Multidisciplinary Regional Advisory Group (ECA- MRAG)	Parmeet Singh	Regional Adviser on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems	

SUB-COMMITTEE ON DATA PROCESSING

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Statistics Sweden
S-11581 Stockholm, SWEDEN
tel +46 8 7834000
fax +46 8 7834791
Mr. Sten Bäcklund
Dr. Jan A. Eklöf

Economic Commission for Africa
(ECA)
P.O. Box 3005
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA
tel +251 1 517200
fax +251 1 514416
Mrs. K. Cassamajor
Mr. Arif M. Farazi

Central Statistical Authority
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA
Mrs. Woobit Assefa

Central Statistical Service
Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA
fax +27 12 3108504
Mr. V. Coetzee

Federal Office of Statistics
P.M.B. 12528
Lagos, NIGERIA
fax +234 1 2635077
Mr. O.O. Ajayi

United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD)
New York, USA
fax +1 212 963 1940
Mrs. Margaret Mbogoni

Southern African Development Community (SADC)
Secretariat
P/Bag 0095
Gaborone, BOTSWANA
fax +267 372848
Mr. E.D.M. Odirile

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
New York, USA
fax +1 212 963 1940
Mr. Tefesse Takele
Mr. Jerome Ahouanmenou

The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20433, USA
fax +1 212 4772900
Mr. Bahjat Achikbache

Institute of Statistics and
Applied Economics (ISAE)
Makerere University
P.O. Box 7062
Kampala, UGANDA
fax +256 41 530756
Prof. James P.M. Ntozi
Mr. Tom Nyanzi

SUB-COMMITTEE ON
ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

<u>Organization/Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax No.</u>
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) New York, USA	D. Sala-Diakanda	Regional Coordinator for Population Office, ECA Cabinet Office	251-1-51-44-16
The World Bank Washington, D.C. USA	Tim Marchant	Senior Economist/Statistician	(202) 370-0201
	Bahjat Achikbache	Senior Statistician	(202) 477 2900
INSEE Paris, France	Philippe Brion	Chef de la division "études et méthodes statistiques pour le développement".	(33-1)41-17-66-52
FAO	F. Ngopya	Joint FAO/ECA Statistician	251-1-51-44-16
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Jérôme Ahouanmenou	UNDP Representative to OAU and Chief, Liaison Office with ECA	251-1-51-59-19
	Graham Chipande	Senior Country Economist	
Statistics Sweden Stockholm, Sweden	Jan A. Eklöf	Chief Statistical Advisor	(468) 783 4199
	Sten Bäcklund	Senior Statistician and EDP adviser	(468) 783 4094
International Monetary Fund (IMF) Washington, USA	Roger Pownall	Advisor	(1-202) 623-6460

**SUB-COMMITTEE ON
ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS**

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)

<u>Organisation/Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax No.</u>
United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) New York, USA	Osborne Jackson	Deputy Director	(1-212) 963 9851
AFRISTAT s/c DIAL Paris, France	Lamine Diop	Directeur général	(331) 42 08 81 60
IPC Bureau of the Census Washington, USA	Robert D. Bush	Chief, Technical Assistance Staff	(301) 457-30 33
SADC Gaborone, Botswana	E.D.M. Odirile	Statistician	(267) 372848
OAU Addis Ababa	Hassan W. Elhassan	Chief Research, Planning and Statistics Section	(251 1) 51 30 36
ISAE Makerere University Kampala, Uganda	James P.M. Ntozi	Director	(256) 41 53 07 56
Federal office of statistics Lagos, Nigeria	O.O. Ajayi	Director general Chairman of CASD	(234-1) 263 50 77
Central Statistical Authority Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	Abdulah Hassen	General Manager	
Statistics Norway Oslo, Norway	Ib Thomsen	Director of Research	(47) 22 86 4988

SUB-COMMITTEE ON
ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS (Cont.)

<u>Organisation/Agency</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Fax no.</u>
Central Statistical Office Zambia	David Diangamo	Director	260 1 250195
ILO Addis Ababa	Knop R.	Senior Labour Statistics Specialist	(251-1) 51 36 33
Institut national de la statistique BPV55 Abidjan Côte d'Ivoire	Lago Appo. Bouabre	Sous Directeur	(225) 21 44 01
	Ouattara Idrissa	Sous Directeur	(225) 21 44 01
Bureau of Statistics Maseru, Lesotho	M.F. Florence Morojele	Director	+226 310177
Banque Africaine de développement (BAD) Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire	Andre Cyprien Portella	Statisticien/Economiste principal	(225) 20 49 48
ECA Statistics Division	A.E Cummings-Palmer		(251-1) 51 05 12
	K.K. Bockor		
	A.K. Amelewonou		
	E.F. Ching'anda		
	R. Rakotobe		
ECA Multidisciplinary Regional Advisory Group (ECA/MRAG)	Parmeet Singh	Regional Adviser on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems	