Africa’s City indicators validated by National Statistical Offices

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, September 20, 2018 (ECA) - On September 18th to 19th, participants representing twenty-eight African National Statistical Offices (NSOs) met to critically review and validate the Indicator set and Reference Guide on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements.

This initiative, conceptualized over a year ago, was led by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), working closely with African National Statistical Offices (NSOs), the United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-HABITAT), the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).

The Reference Guide, an output of the African Programme of Urbanization Data and Statistics, drew extensively on local and regional expertise from across the continent to answer the question of what it means to measure urbanization in an African context.

The Guide will provide a common Pan-African set of urban indicators measured using harmonized methodologies and concepts for comparability, making it easier for member States to monitor and report progress on regional and global commitments such as the sustainable development goals, Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the New Urban Agenda in the region.

Ms. Edlam Yemeru, Chief of the Urbanization Section at the ECA, shared that historically, data globally has been disaggregated between urban and rural areas, but only to a very limited extent between and within individual cities and that the newly validated Reference Guide will enhance NSO capacity to measure and analyze urban data needed for effective City and national-level planning.

Through using an Africa-wide harmonized approach to indices and metrics for monitoring and quantifying the urbanization process, NSOs in different member States will be able to work more closely together to produce urban data and statistics, radically improving the quality of urban data continent-wide.

Having the data disaggregated at City level will help countries to confirm the role of cities as engines for growth, hubs for innovation and cultural preservation, and spaces for the strengthening of social cohesion.

Most importantly, the practical guidance offered to NSOs through the Reference Guide will strengthen the evidence base for the productive, inclusive, and sustainable African cities.

“It is now critical for all stakeholders to prioritize and allocate resources to ensure that we have City indicators in our primary and secondary cities in a way that will allow their contribution to overall national prosperity and wellbeing over the coming years,” Ms. Yemeru said.

The AfDB is particularly interested in the initiative as a data user with the hope that this will better inform decisions for resource allocation and investments to countries even at a City level.

Mr. Robert Ndugwa from the Urban Observatory Office at UN-HABITAT commended ECA for the pioneering approach, the first of its kind for any region in the world.
Given the demonstrated key importance of high-quality urban data in the undertaking of effective urban and national planning, the Reference Guide will be used as a tool to empower nations across the continent; leading the way for other regions to follow.

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