

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

African Centre for Statistics

2007 African Statistics Day Celebrations

Communiqué

**“Improving Employment and Related Indicators to Better Inform Labour
Policies and Programmes in Africa”**

In May 1990, the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the 16th meeting of African Ministers of Economic Planning and Development adopted 18 November as African Statistics Day, to be celebrated each year, in order to “*increase public awareness of the important role which statistics play in all aspects of the social and economic life*” of our countries and the continent.

The theme for the celebrations this year is: **Improving Employment and Related Indicators to Better Inform Labour Policies and Programmes in Africa**. This theme is derived from the Conclusions of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in 2006 and in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2007. The 2006 Conference affirmed the centrality of employment and its primary role in poverty reduction and national development, while the 2007 Conference recognized the slow progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is, therefore, crucial to raise awareness of data producers, users, suppliers and the population at large of the importance of having better statistics, in order to monitor implementation of job-creation policies and programmes as well as the MDGs.

The 2006 Conference of African Ministers of Finance noted with concern that employment had not been embedded in national development strategies, commonly referred to as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), in many African countries. In order to create decent jobs in Africa, employment should be mainstreamed into national development agenda, and African countries should explicitly commit themselves to incorporating employment objectives and targets into their national development strategies and policies.

The special needs of vulnerable groups in society were also recognized, including increasing employment opportunities for women, youth, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons, refugees and returnees. Despite the strong commitment of the international community to end gender discrimination and despite major advances made in this area, some forms of discrimination remain. For example, there are still gender gaps in employment and pay and occupational segregation between men and women. A recent International Labour Organization (ILO) Report entitled *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, noted that a key measure for women's improvement is the availability of good-quality jobs for women in legislative, senior official or managerial positions and a higher participation rate among women in the labour force, which would indicate that discriminatory barriers have been reduced. However, according to the report, women still represent a distinct minority in such positions throughout the world, holding only 28.3 per cent of these senior jobs, and progress across the regions has been uneven.

In Africa, child labour is very widespread, particularly in agriculture, livestock herding and mining. According to estimates by the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), in some cases, children begin work as early as five years of age and, as a result, children under the age of 10 account for 20 per cent of child labour in some rural areas. This means that a high percentage of children is not attending school.

Currently, African countries are faced with massive emigration. Forecasts show that the number of migrants crossing borders in search of employment and human security is expected to

increase rapidly in the coming decades due to the failure of globalization to provide jobs and economic opportunities to the growing labour force in Africa.

The foregoing highlights the need for national statistical systems in Africa to increase the availability of accurate, timely and policy-relevant data on employment and related indicators. This will entail, *inter alia*, building consensus on concepts and definitions related to employment; carefully defining and refining methods for collecting data on each employment category; and measuring and profiling the informal sector, which covers a wide range of labour market activities and which provides many job opportunities.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa will partner with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the International Labour Organization, the Regional Economic Communities and other key stakeholders, to support employment-generation strategies and programmes in Africa, by helping countries compile and provide quality data on employment, in compliance with the methodologies, standards, recommendations and guidelines developed by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians and the 1993 System of National Accounts. This will be done under the *Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity-Building in Africa (RRSF)*, a blueprint adopted by the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in April 2007 for moving forward on statistical capacity-building in Africa in a coherent and comprehensive manner.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa wishes you success in all the activities you will undertake in celebration of African Statistics Day.