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

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
8 - 9 March 1996**

Report to the CASD by the Secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. We should recall at the outset that the Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) was created in March 1992 following the adoption of the Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. It was recognized at that time that the success of technical cooperation at both national and international levels could be better achieved through proper coordination of the various statistical activities and also by recognizing priorities of countries.

2. The main objective of the CASD is to coordinate and direct efforts being made to revitalise, rehabilitate and develop the African statistical network and to monitor the overall implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. Four Sub-committees to address specific areas of concern to CASD were also created to ensure smooth implementation of CASD activities. The Secretariat of CASD was decided by the first inter-agency meeting, to be located in the ECA Statistics Division and to be the focal point for intellectual leadership in the work of the Sub-committees.

3. Four years have now past since the establishment of CASD and its Sub-committees. The present paper attempts to review progress in CASD activities and discuss selected issues on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. The future of CASD and its sub-committees will form the climax of the discussion particularly since the 5th CASD meeting decided that CASD should be evaluated.

II. REVIEW OF CASD ACTIVITIES

a) Activities undertaken by the Secretariat since the Fifth CASD meeting.

4. It should be recalled that the joint meeting of Sub-committees on Training and Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems on 18 March 1994 in Addis Ababa gave the leadership of Action 4: Directors opinion poll, out of the ten-point Action Plan of the Training Sub-committee, to CASD secretariat. The objectives of the action was to find out from Directors of National Statistical offices: (i) their opinions on the quantity, quality and relevance of training available to them to meet their training needs; and (ii) the organizational relationships between various parts of the National Statistical Systems. The output of the action was expected to be a report summarizing the views of the Directors with a summary showing the unsatisfied demand.

5. Questionnaires on the regional survey of Statistical Organization and Training were prepared by the CASD Secretariat and sent to all African countries. A report of the Pilot Analysis of

the Regional Survey of Statistical Organization Training, 1994 was presented to the Third meeting of the Sub-committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems, Addis Ababa, 25-26 May 1995. The meeting was concerned about the low response rate of 14 out of 49 countries (28.6 per cent) and requested the Secretariat to continue following-up on the countries which had not responded.

6. As a result, the Secretariat despatched fresh questionnaires to 35 countries which had not responded by March 1995 followed by cable/facsimile reminders. The report of the Pilot Analysis of the Regional Survey of Statistical Organization and Training and a summary of the discussion which took place at the Third meeting of the CASD Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems, were sent to the Task Force members of this Action. The result of these effort was that by December 1995, twenty three countries in Africa responded to the survey and the response rate was raised to 46 percent. This enabled a full analysis of the survey to be undertaken.

7. The results of the analysis of the survey were presented at the joint meeting of the Training and Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems Sub-committees in Paris, France, 15-17 January 1996. The joint meeting congratulated ECA on its work, but recommended that it should not try to increase the response rate further. ECA was requested to finalise the report in its present form and edit the summary to take into account comments and recommendations made at the meeting.

8. It should be recalled that the Addis Ababa Plan of Action strongly recommended that African governments "adopt the 18th of November as African Statistics Day in order to increase public awareness of the important role which statistics play in all aspects of social and economic life". In this connection the CASD Secretariat was active in the celebration of the 1995 African Statistics Day. The theme chosen for 1995 was "Enhancing Data Production and Dissemination for Effective Socio-Economic Policy Analysis and Management". ECA invited all its member states to celebrate African Statistics Day on 18 November 1995 together with African Development Information Day (19 November). A press release was prepared and sent, on time, to all Directors of Central Statistics Offices, together with sufficient copies of a poster for exhibition in the countries.

9. As part of the preparation for the Ninth session of the Conference of African Planners, Statisticians, Population and Information specialists, Addis Ababa, 11-16 March 1996 the CASD Secretariat prepared two documents of direct relevance to CASD activities. The first paper "Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development and its Sub-committees; Major achievements and selected issues" is a report of the major tasks achieved so far by CASD through the Secretariat and its four Sub-committees and

selected issues discussed at the 5th meeting of CASD concerning mainly the steps to be taken to increase the impact of CASD activities in the future. This paper will be presented to the Statistics Committee of the Conference. The second paper "Statistical Needs Assessment and Strategy Development: The African Experience" is a presentation of the experience of the African countries in conducting Needs Assessment and Strategy Development (NASD) exercises within the framework of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. The African experiences were obtained from the countries themselves through a survey which was conducted during the month of November 1995. Information on the date of NASD, overall objectives, external partners, organizational structure, findings and implications, follow-up action and usefulness of NASD guidelines was obtained for each country which undertook the exercises. This paper will be presented to the plenary of the conference to enable Planners, Population and Information Specialists also benefit from the value of the NASD.

10. It was reported at the 5th CASD meeting that an adviser located within the ECA Multidisciplinary Regional Advisory Group (MRAG) took up his assignment on 23 July 1994. Since May 1995, the Advisor has undertaken a number of activities mainly technical advisory missions to African countries to assist them in planning or conducting NASD exercises and also to participate in workshops involving producers and users of statistics. Among the African countries visited since the 5th CASD meeting are Botswana, Nigeria and Uganda.

11. With regard to participation at meeting, the CASD Secretariat was represented at the joint meeting of the Training and Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems Sub-committees, held at the World Bank Office in Paris, France from 15-17 January 1996. The CASD Secretariat representative reported on progress of CASD activities and also led the discussion on the "Survey of Statistical Organization and Training: Result of the Pilot Analysis".

12. Following the recommendation of the 5th meeting of CASD that the document "Framework for Monitoring Statistical Development in Africa" should be produced in final form and sent to the African National Statistical Offices, CASD Secretariat undertook the finalisation of the document and published it in English and French. The document was disseminated to all National Statistical offices, training centres, etc for their use.

(b) Activities undertaken by Substantive CASD Sub-committees.

13. It is not the intention to go into detail about the activities undertaken by each of the Sub-committees. The convenors of the sub-committees will have reported already activities of their sub-

committee under a separate agenda item. We present some highlights of the main activities of the Sub-committees since the 5th meeting of CASD.

Sub-committee on Training

14. The Sub-committee prepared background materials and serviced the joint meeting with the Organization and Management Sub-committee in Paris, France from 15-17 January 1996. The ten activities which were identified by the Sub-committee as a means to achieve its overall objective:

1. Training needs study
2. Survey of training schools
3. Survey of aid for training
4. Directors opinion poll
5. Subsidiarily as applied to statistical training
6. Study of contracts of association
7. Coordination with main CASD and other Sub-committees
8. Methods and tools
9. Compendium of statistical training
10. Dissemination of course information

were discussed. Some of the actions required surveys to be undertaken, while others involved desk studies.

15. From the report of the joint Sub-committees meeting, Paris, January 1996, the Sub-committees discussed progress made so far in the achievement of some of the actions e.g. actions 2, 3, 4, 9/10. Conclusions and recommendations of the actions would be included in the final report to CASD by the Training Sub-committee and present the culmination of three years of work.

Sub-committee on Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems.

16. Since the 5th CASD meeting at which time the Sub-committee held its 3rd meeting, the Sub-committee has concentrated its efforts in the three priority action areas which were identified as a means to achieve its objectives. These activities are:

1. Study on actual practices and experiences of countries initiating the NASD exercises;
2. Study of the relationship between Central Statistical Offices (CSOs) and other elements of the National Statistical System; and
3. Study on data dissemination policy in African countries.

17. On the study of actual practices and experience of African countries initiating NASD exercises the World Bank which is responsible for this action produced the third revision of this study in their report titled "Statistical Needs Assessment and Planning - a review of approaches and current practices". This report was presented at the joint meeting of the Training and Organization and Management Sub-committees, 15-17 January 1996, Paris, France. It was agreed that this document should be discussed in depth again by the full CASD. This action is in connection with Actions 1 of the Sub-committee on Training. On the study of the relationships between the CSOs and other elements of the National Statistical Systems, this study was undertaken by the CASD Secretariat in connection with Action 4 of the Sub-committee on Training. A report of the Regional survey on Statistical Organization and Training: Results of the Pilot Analysis was presented at the joint Sub-committees meeting in Paris. Members of the committees recommended that the Secretariat should not try to increase the response further. The report is being finalised and the summary is being edited to take into account comments and recommendations which were made.

18. Regarding the study on data dissemination policy in African countries, the World Bank prepared a paper "A proposal for an African household data archive/data service centre". This paper was presented at the joint meeting of the Training and Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems in Paris, 15-17 January 1996. The problem which was foreseen is that of a large amount of household survey data which is inaccessible and unexploited, due to technical difficulties and also political reluctance to authorise access. This centre was proposed to be located at ECA because of its existing links with African Statistical Offices. The CASD secretariat was in favour of the proposal which was made by the World Bank. It was however difficult to come to any decision until the ECA restructuring exercise was finalised.

19. The meeting requested the World Bank to examine the proposal further in particular to see the feasibility of a pilot in an African subregion. They will also examine the needs of technical assistance at national level in order to support the regional initiative. A revised proposal will be brought back to CASD.

Sub-Committee on Data Processing

20. The Sub-Committee has since its establishment held three meetings (June 1993 in Stockholm, March 1994 in Addis Ababa and May 1995 in Addis Ababa). Its fifth meeting is being held alongside the current CASD meeting.

21. Since its last meeting, in order to gauge the statistical EDP capability of the African region, survey questionnaires were sent

to the member States during October 1995. So far 27 returns from 14 countries have been received. The following two outputs from the survey are expected:

- . Directory of Electronic Data Processing Centres and experts in Africa (first draft already produced); and
- . a consolidated report on the EDP capability situation in the region to be jointly reproduced by Statistics Sweden and CASD Secretariat.

Sub-committee on Research, Methods and Standards

22. The Sub-committee had its first meeting in March 1994 and its second meeting in May 1995. The Sub-committee was urged to disseminate the report of the survey on Statistical Research Activities to six organizations/institutions which responded to the survey and also to CSOs and members of the Sub-committee. The sub-committee was requested to make efforts to improve the response rate of the survey. In addition to this activity the Sub-committee was expected to come up with an action plan with well-defined and concrete activities. Such an action plan was expected to have implications for donor support.

23. It should be stated that the convenor of the Sub-committee is also leading the Task Force on Action 3 of the Sub-committee on Training "Survey of Aid for Training". At the Joint Training and Organization and Management Sub-committees meeting in January 1996, Paris, France, a paper summarising the findings of the survey of donor agencies was presented. The recommendations of the study were to be incorporated into the overall recommendations of the final report on the Actions of the Training Sub-committee.

III. SELECTED ISSUES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ADDIS ABABA PLAN OF ACTION FOR STATISTICAL DEVELOPMENT

24. In chapter II of this document, a description of activities which have been undertaken by the CASD Secretariat and the four sub-committees since the 5th meeting of CASD has been provided. In this chapter, we shall discuss selected issues on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s.

a) The future of CASD and its Sub-committees

25. It should be recalled that the Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) was established within the framework of the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s. The CASD Sub-committees were established to address specific issues of African

statistical development; Training; Organization and Management of National Statistics Systems; Data Processing; and Research, Methods and Standards, as were thought appropriate at the time of forming CASD.

26. The main objective of CASD is to coordinate and direct efforts being made to revitalize, rehabilitate and develop the African statistical systems and to monitor the overall implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s.

27. The future of CASD and its Sub-committees was raised at the fifth meeting in May 1995. Some participants wondered whether CASD was doing what it was set up to do. The idea of restructuring of CASD by replacing the present four CASD Sub-committees by a CASD Technical Sub-committee was mooted. The idea being that the Technical Sub-committee would deal with specific and cross-cutting issues and activities to enable impact at the national level.

28. On the restructuring of CASD it was proposed that any change in the present structure should be preceded by an assessment of the achievements of the objectives of CASD. The CASD Secretariat, in cooperation with the World Bank; Statistics Sweden; Statistical Office of the European Union (EUROSTAT); Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics, Makerere University (ISAE); International Programs Centre (IPC), United States Bureau of the Census; Observatoire économique et statistique d'Afrique Subsaharienne (AFRISTAT); United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), etc, was requested to undertake an evaluation of CASD and its Sub-committees.

29. There were two schools of thought on the evaluation, either it should be undertaken internally or a consultant should be recruited to undertake the evaluation. Regarding the use of a consultant the CASD Secretariat prepared terms of reference for the consultant and communicated its document to other agencies. Due to resource constraints the recruitment of a consultant appeared remote. Suggestions were made by some agencies that the evaluation should be undertaken by the CASD Secretariat and the Sub-committees should evaluate themselves. It was felt that this latter approach would produce the best results of the evaluation since those involved in CASD would provide the best evaluation of the performance of CASD and provide guidance for its future direction.

30. Also raised at the fifth meeting of CASD was the way CASD meetings were convened. It was observed that the meetings were nearly always run parallel to some major meetings due in part to resource constraints. As a result, such an arrangement did not allow adequate time for proper in-depth discussion of issues. Members of the CASD were requested to suggest ways of arranging CASD meetings.

31. In the meantime two Sub-committees: Training and Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems held a joint meeting in Paris, France from 15-17 January 1996. The meeting had on its agenda an item "The future of CASD and its Sub-committees.

32. The following items were discussed: Aims and objectives of CASD, the functioning of the CASD System, resources and influence of CASD and Sub-committees. It was intended to discuss aims and objectives of the Sub-committees, but due to time constraints, this item was not discussed. The Sub-committees were requested to report to CASD on this item. The representative of EUROSTAT at the meeting, agreed to summarise the discussion which took place on this agenda item and the document which has been prepared is available as background material to the discussion of this paper (ECA/STAT/CASD.6/96/2 Add.1).

33. Members of CASD are requested to make further comments and suggestions on the evaluation carried out by members by the two Sub-committees. Also to examine the recommendations made and either endorse or otherwise to enable the CASD Secretariat proceed with the restructuring of CASD.

b) Membership of CASD

34. This issue was discussed at the joint meeting of the two sub-committees in Paris, France under the agenda item "The future of CASD and its Sub-committees". It was considered that the present membership is fluid and unsatisfactory. There is need to clearly define the membership of CASD, make it representational and have some continuity.

35. It may be recalled that the question of how to involve African countries in particular African Statistical Services in CASD was raised at the time CASD was formed, since they have the major responsibility of implementing the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. At that time, it was felt that involving members of the Bureau of the Conference of African Planners, Statisticians, Population and Information Specialists in the committee was an adequate representation of African countries. The members of the bureau of the conference have never participated in CASD meeting due to financial constraints. Attempts by the CASD Secretariat to secure funds for their participation never succeeded.

36. For the first time, representatives of ten national statistical offices participated in the fifth meeting of CASD, in May 1995. That was due to the fact that the meeting was organized in connection with the First Joint Conference of the International Association for Official Statistics (IAOS) and the African Statistical Association (AFSA). The participation of some African countries was made possible due to the generous financial support

of the World Bank, the IAOS and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

37. To enable CASD membership to be representational and have some continuity members of the Training and Organization and Management Sub-committees have proposed that the UN Statistical Commission System of dividing the statistical world into constituencies, each of whom was represented at the Commission, to be a useful model for CASD. Directors, Trainers, Users, Donors and Agencies should all be represented on CASD by an elected or nominated member or members. In this way the committee would be small enough to be effective. The members of the two sub-committees did not discuss the financial implications of adopting such a model. The Statistical Commission succeeds in financing many African representatives through funds provided in a budget of the United Nations Statistical Division.

38. In the light of the above issues regarding the membership of CASD, participants at this meeting are requested to make comments and suggestions to enable the CASD Secretariat proceed revising the membership of CASD to ensure effectiveness in its work.

c) Strengthening of CASD Secretariat

39. The location of the CASD Secretariat in the ECA Statistics Division was recommended at the first inter-agency meeting which also called for an effective and strengthened CASD Secretariat.

40. The resources for running CASD activities were at the time of creation of CASD expected to be provided by UNDP through a project. The project proposal requesting support for the implemented of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action, during the UNDP fifth Programming Cycle, was unfortunately not approved. Since that time it has been very difficult for the CASD Secretariat to efficiently play its role, given the limited resources at its disposal within the ECA Regular Budget.

41. The issue was discussed at the fifth meeting of CASD. It was noted that inadequate finance has had serious effects on the coordination role of the CASD Secretariat. There is therefore an urgent need for the establishment of an enabling environment for the Secretariat to function efficiently.

42. At the joint Training and Organization and Management Sub-committees meeting in Paris, France, January 1996, it was noted that resources were required at three levels: implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action, support to CASD secretariat and support to attendance at meetings. While donors were prepared to examine the possibility of financing attendance at CASD meetings, there was need to work at funding for the Secretariat. Members of the two Sub-committees recognized the restructuring which was in

progress at ECA and acknowledged with gratitude the work which the CASD Secretariat was able to do. They recognized that restructuring was an internal matter of ECA and looked forward to a strengthened CASD Secretariat through the restructuring process.

43. Participants at the 6th meeting of CASD may wish to suggest ways of strengthening the CASD Secretariat to ensure that it carries out its coordination role effectively.

d) Needs Assessment and Strategy Development Exercises

44. Within the framework of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s, as a first step towards setting up of efficient and sustainable statistical systems, the strategy for the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action recommended that each country of the African region should undertake Needs Assessment and Strategy Development (NASD) exercises. In order to assist countries in the exercise, CASD recommended that guidelines on NASD be prepared. A task force which was established to consider and elaborate the guidelines presented its draft guidelines to the second meeting of CASD in Nairobi, November 1992. These guidelines were presented and disseminated to countries during 1993.

45. It should be mentioned that the World Bank has undertaken to prepare a document "Statistical Needs Assessment and Planning - A Review of Approaches and Current Practices". This document is in line with Action 1 of the Training Sub-committee of CASD "Training need study". The document should be seen as complementing the guidelines prepared by CASD in that a number of theoretical aspects of NASD are explained and the experiences of African countries which have conducted these studies are provided.

46. As part of monitoring the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action, the CASD Secretariat conducted a survey of all African countries, in November 1995 to obtain the experiences of the countries in this field. Out of 50 countries which were surveyed, responses were received from 24 countries. Of the 24 countries 10 had conducted NASD exercise and 14 had not done so. With regard to planning of future NASD exercises the majority of countries indicated that they plan to conduct NASD during 1996 and 1997. Only one country did not envisage conducting the exercise in the near future while another country did not know when it would conduct the exercise.

47. It is indeed encouraging to note that countries are implementing NASD exercise and that other countries are planning to do so in the near future. What may be useful to know is the type of assistance countries may wish to be provided to ensure that their NASD exercises are adequately planned and implemented.

Participants may wish to provide their experiences and the type of assistance they may require for their NASD exercises.

IV. CONCLUSION

48. The CASD and its Sub-committees were established in 1992 by representative of agencies interested/involved in Statistical Development of the African region. CASD was mandated to act as a coordinating body for statistical activities within the framework of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action and the Strategy for its implementation.

49. Four years have now passed since the creation of CASD. At the fifth meeting of CASD, the Secretariat together with other agencies was requested to undertake an evaluation of CASD. This led to consultations on the best ways of conducting this evaluation.

50. In the meantime the joint CASD Training and Organization and Management Sub-committees discussed many issues of CASD and made specific recommendations which are presented in a document prepared by EUROSTAT as background to the discussion on the evaluation of CASD. The CASD Secretariat is very grateful for the work done by the two Sub-committees and would appreciate comments, suggestions and/or endorsements of recommendations to enable it to take them into account in the future organization of CASD and its activities to ensure accelerated implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s.