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Report to the CASD by the Secretariat

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I. Introduction

1. It should be recalled that the main objective of the Coordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) is to act as a coordinating body for statistical development activities in Africa and to monitor the overall implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa. CASD was created in 1992 in recognition of the need to ensure the success of technical cooperation at both national, regional and international levels through proper coordination of the various statistical development activities in Africa.

II. Review of CASD Activities

(a) Restructuring and formation of task forces

2. CASD has had a major restructuring once in 1996. From 1992-1996, the work of CASD was driven by four sub-committees viz: Organization and Management of National Statistical Systems; Training; Data Processing; and Research Methods and Standards. During the Sixth meeting of CASD in March 1996, The Four sub-committees were dissolved, CASD was restructured to be driven by task forces, the membership of which was not exclusive to CASD members, to carry out specific *ad-hoc* tasks. The CASD secretariat was asked to propose task forces for discussion at its seventh meeting.

3. At the seventh meeting of CASD, 21-22 May 1997, the secretariat proposed nine task forces. Some of the task forces were adopted with changes in their titles, some were merged into one task force with title changes while others were said not to merit establishment due to various reasons. The Committee adopted the following five task forces to drive the work of CASD: task force 1 - Connectivity for statistics (task leader: CASD secretariat); task force 2 - Monitoring the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action (task leader: CASD secretariat); task force 3 - Strengthening of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) centres (task leader: Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE), Makerere University, Uganda); task force 4 - Country and regional micro data service units and library, *inter alia* for poverty and gender monitoring-pilot project (task leader: The World Bank); and task force 5 - Country live database - pilot project (task leader: The World Bank). These task forces have therefore occupied the work of CASD for the last twelve months.

(b) Dissemination of information on task forces

4. Between July and August 1997, the secretariat informed all CASD members and Directors of National Statistical Offices of the establishment of the above five task forces. This information was disseminated in two ways: the dissemination of the CASD report in two languages (English and French) and a letter written to all attaching the list of task forces including information on the coordinators, their

mailing addresses and the e-mail addresses. The secretariat encouraged the members as well as non-members to associate themselves to the task forces of their interest and to inform either the secretariat or the task leader of their intention with regard to the choice of task forces.

5. Apart from the choices of task forces which were made by CASD members during the seventh meeting, the CASD secretariat received proposals from the International Programs Centre (IPC), US Bureau of the Census to take active part in task forces 1, 3, 4 and 5. The secretariat informed the other leaders of the task forces accordingly and sent to them by facsimile, the letter received from IPC, US Bureau of the Census.

(c) Preparation of work plans/work programmes for the implementation of task forces

6. During the month of July 1997, the secretariat prepared a work plan for the task forces under its leadership. This was an attempt to ensure that there is a plan on how to implement the task force activities. The CASD secretariat wrote to the other task leaders, ISAE, Makerere University and The World Bank and encouraged them to prepare their own work plans/workprogrammes.

(d) Creation of CASD Observer member status

7. During the seventh meeting of the Committee, it was recognised that some international agencies including African regional institutions e.g. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the African Development Bank (ADB), etc. should be involved in the work of CASD. The decision on granting of observer member status in CASD was deferred to the present meeting. The secretariat was requested to study the issue further and present proposals to this meeting.

8. The secretariat has indeed studied this issue further. The secretariat identified the following international agencies as potential observer members: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organisations of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC). The following African regional and sub-regional organizations have also been identified as potential observer members: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Development Bank (ADB), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Union économique et monétaire ouest-africaine (UEMOA). During March 1998, the secretariat wrote to these agencies inviting them to become observer members of CASD. A short write-up on the CASD, its terms of reference and the current membership was enclosed with the invitation letter. CASD members may wish to attend the list proposed by the secretariat. The

present meeting of the Committee will be informed of any responses which the secretariat will have received.

9. Regarding the functions to be performed by CASD Observer members, the secretariat is of the view that the following function will be appropriate: (i) Act as focal points in their agency and/or subregion on CASD matters including the dissemination of CASD activities; (ii) Participate in CASD meetings; (iii) Participate in the leadership or as Associate in the CASD task forces; (iv) and inform CASD on relevant activities which their agencies may be performing. CASD members may wish to review these functions and amend or propose additional functions which CASD Observer members could perform.

(e) Preparation of the CASD newsletter

10. At the seventh meeting of the Committee, during the consideration of task forces, it was stated that the introduction of a CASD newsletter would facilitate dissemination of information on activities of the task forces, the CASD in general and the secretariat. The secretariat has prepared the first CASD newsletter of the CASD which includes information on task forces (title, leadership, description of the various phases of implementation etc.), progress report on some task forces, and other relevant information on statistical development of African countries. The first newsletter has been disseminated to all CASD members, national statistical offices, statistical training centres and is available to you at this meeting.

(f) Progress on the work of present task forces and proposals of new task forces

11. Progress on the work of each of the five task forces which were adopted at the seventh meeting will be presented and discussed under agenda item 5. The Committee will have the opportunity of discussing achievements, impact and the future work, if any, of the task forces. CASD will have to decide on the continuation or termination of the work of each of the task forces.

12. Under agenda item 6: The future of CASD and its workprogramme, members will have the opportunity of making proposals of new task forces which they may wish introduced in the work of CASD.

(g) Attendance at AFRISTAT Scientific Council meetings

13. The secretariat of CASD was invited to participate in its capacity as a member of the Scientific Council of AFRISTAT which took place in Bamako (Mali) from 6 to 8 October 1997. The secretariat participated in this meeting and actively participated in furthering the aims of AFRISTAT.

III. Progress report on selected areas not covered by CASD task forces

(a) Electronic data processing capability in African countries

14. Activities relating to this area were as follows. The first aspect which was addressed is that of software usage within the region. In that connection, a report, "Inventory of Software Utilized for Statistical Data Processing in Africa" has been prepared. This report presents an inventory of statistical packages utilized in African Electronic Data Processing environments. It is based on an inquiry, which was conducted during 1996, of African statistical agencies/institutions. In it, the kinds of software packages used and their frequency of usage are documented. This report is available upon request.

15. Secondly, a workshop was conducted, in November 1997, entitled "The Application of New Technologies in Database Management and Data Dissemination". This workshop was attended by twenty-three participants from twenty-two countries. It had among its objectives the standardization of national statistical database management methodologies. It also addressed the issue of the development and harmonization of an interlinked system of information systems including data collection, transfer and dissemination aspects. Among the topics presented were: "Trends in database management and problems associated with establishing integrated databases at national statistical offices" and the "Application of the UNESIS model for the development of integrated databases at national level: presentation of pilot databases". Each of these topics addressed the importance of electronic data processing capability to African countries and they were both well received. The report of the workshop is available upon request.

(b) Promotion of the development of minimum national social data sets for member States

16. The idea of the Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) originated in the need to help countries to monitor the actions identified in a number of United Nations Conferences. The MNSDS was developed by the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences. It was endorsed by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session held in New York 11-14 February 1997. The Commission stressed that the indicators in MNSDS should be considered as a minimum not a maximum list and invited users to build on it to meet national needs and circumstances and requirements in specific fields. Some fifteen indicators have now been identified as constituting the MNSDS and these overlap with the indicators collected by the United Nations Statistics Division. The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) will be able to report more comprehensively on progress made in this area.

17. The fifteen indicators already identified as constituting the MNSDS are:

1. Population estimates by sex, age and, where appropriate and feasible, ethnic group

2. Life expectancy at birth, by sex
3. Infant mortality, by sex
4. Child mortality, by sex
5. Maternal mortality
6. Contraceptive prevalence rate
7. Average number of years of schooling completed, by urban/rural, sex and, where possible, by income class
8. Number of people per room, excluding kitchen and bathroom
9. Access to safe water
10. Access to sanitation
11. Monetary value of the basket of food needed for minimum nutritional requirement
12. GDP per capita
13. Household income per capita (level and distribution)
14. Unemployment rate, by sex
15. Employment-population ratio, by sex and where appropriate formal and informal sector

(c) Implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts in Africa and issues of coordination

18. During the past 12 months, ECA convened two meetings; a regional and a national workshop. A regional workshop on Public Sector Accounts within the framework of the 1993 System of national Accounts, was convened in Addis Ababa 27-31 October 1997. Seventeen African countries participated in the workshop. Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Morocco, Niger, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Two agencies AFRISTAT and the United Nations Statistics Division were also represented, the latter as resource person. A National Workshop on Methods for Estimating Gross Capital Formation was organized at the request of the Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (MEDAC), The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa, 23-24 March 1998.

19. ECA participated in two meetings: Expert Working Group on Household Satellite Accounts, 6-10 October 1997, New York, and the Inter-Secretariat Working Group Meeting, held in Luxembourg, 12-14 October 1997.

20. Technical advisory missions in the field of national accounts were undertaken by ECA to Seychelles (21 November-5 December 1997); Djibouti (13-20 December 1997) and Democratic Republic of Congo (6-14 February 1998). The mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo also included the objective of rehabilitation of the National Statistical System and proposition of an action plan.

21. The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) will make its contribution to this report with respect to Anglophone countries with DFID funded projects.

(d) Establishment of an African household data archive/service centre

22. The focus of this activity is on the storage in standardized formats and the dissemination and use of micro data compiled from African household surveys data files available at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington D.C. The basic motivation comes from the growing concern over the weak status of African statistics needed to conduct poverty monitoring and gender analysis in the region. The offer has been made by the World Bank to transfer the existing stock of data from the World Bank to Africa, with ECA as the premier repository and the central point for data collection and dissemination, data quality control and updating. The role of ECA will also include, users needs assessment, training of national personnel on the use of survey data through workshops and seminars.

23. This activity falls within task force 4 of which the World Bank is the task leader and ECA, AFRISTAT, UNSD, Nigeria, South Africa and statistical directors from the 2-5 pilot countries are associates. The flow of information has not been effective when compared to the implementation of activities related to the development of Country as well as African Live Database (CLDB and ALDB). This has mainly been due to the fact that certain agreements have to be made with the African countries before the data is transferred to ECA.

24. On the ECA's side, the Chief of the Development Information Services Division (DISD) and two other staff members of the Division undertook a three weeks study-tour/workshop to Washington D.C. in June-July 1997. During that period, briefing sessions as well as brief presentations of the existing provisional structure of the standardized data files (content and structure), including instructions for creating the standardized data files, were provided. Most of the files are presently in SPSS or SAS formats. The ECA's participants were assured once again on the intention of the World Bank to activate the transfer of the household survey files to ECA.

25. Recently, during a meeting with the Senior Statistician of the World Bank in charge of the Data Library/Data Bank, it has been agreed to extend the exercise to the African Development Bank and launch the activities of the task force after an official presentation to member States of the terms of reference which are to be discussed in Abidjan towards the end of April 1998. The involvement of ADB will signal the commitment of this organization in CASD activities. Meanwhile, the hosting computer equipment should be in place at ECA and the choice of pilot countries should be made.

(e) Technical cooperation in statistics

26. The CASD secretariat is aware of the important work being undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Commission in this area. At the 1997 Statistical Commission meeting, a workshop on technical cooperation in statistics was set up. The CASD secretariat was informed by DFID which is a member of the workshop that a draft document entitled "Some Guiding Principles for Good Practices in Technical Cooperation for Statistics" is now available for discussion by the Regional Commissions in preparation for discussion at the next UN Statistical Commission meeting in 1999. DFID suggested that it may be useful for CASD members to discuss the current draft document for comments. The representative of DFID agreed to make a brief statement on it before discussion by CASD members under this agenda item.

IV. Mobilization of resources for CASD and other statistical activities

27. At the last meeting of the CASD a paper was presented on mobilization of resources for the implementation of CASD activities. It was explained that nine of the project profiles which were presented to the meeting would be converted into full projects for funding.

28. Efforts have been made by ECA during the past twelve months to seek extra-budgetary resources for funding of CASD as well as other statistical activities. To date extra-budgetary resources have been secured under the Korean Assistance Project (US\$155,000). These funds have supported task force 2 activities and other statistical activities, details of which will be provided under agenda item 5. It is our hope that these funds will be increased during the next twelve months.

29. Discussions have been held between ECA and the British and the French Governments on the possibilities for assistance in the field of statistics. These discussions which have so far been positive will be pursued in the next few months.

30. Within the framework of forging partnerships for Africa's future, a statistical project document was prepared by ECA on Strengthening Capacity for Statistical Development in Africa for the Twenty-first Century. This project was prepared in the context of ECA reforms, areas and modalities for collaboration. Project tasks and activities which have been included in this document are: Strengthening Statistical Training in Africa; implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA); Establishment of National and Regional Standardized Micro-data Libraries for Poverty and Gender Monitoring in Africa and Statistical Needs Assessment and Capacity Building in Statistical Operations and Data Analysis in Africa.

V. Conclusion

31. A review of CASD activities including progress on selected areas which are not covered by the present task forces but were presented to the last CASD meeting as potential areas of task forces, have been summarized to the extent known by the secretariat. The extent to which the secretariat has made efforts to mobilize extra-budgetary financial resources for CASD and other statistical activities has also been described.

32. The Committee may wish to discuss among other things:

a) The possibility of creating CASD Observer member status among its membership to accommodate relevant international, regional and subregional bodies.

b) Provide additional information known to them on activities not covered by task forces.

c) Comment on efforts made by the CASD secretariat in the mobilization of resources for CASD and other statistical activities.