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**Eighth meeting of the Coordinating Committee  
on African Statistical Development (CASD)**

**.... May 1998  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**The Future of CASD and Its Work Programme**

## I. Introduction

1. Statistical development in Africa continues to be an area of major concern for African member States and their partners. The Co-ordinating Committee on African Statistical Development (CASD) was established in 1992 by the ECA Conference of Ministers responsible for Economic Development and Planning. CASD, which is charged with the responsibility for co-ordinating statistical development in Africa, has been addressing this issue ever since its establishment. Although tremendous progress has been achieved, much still remains to be done.

2. A major achievement of international co-operation for Africa's statistical development was the preparation of the Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s, adopted by the Conference of Ministers in 1992. Within the context of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa and the Strategy, CASD has endeavoured to co-ordinate inter-agency activities and also made initiatives to promote statistical development in Africa.

3. In spite of the measures put in place and the progress achieved, the challenges of statistical development in Africa have been quite daunting leading to a continuing reassessment as to whether the right strategies and policies were being adopted, and whether CASD has a future. This paper while not an evaluation, attempts to address some of the concerns regarding the future of CASD and further reviews the achievements and the magnitude of the task that remains to be accomplished. The membership of CASD for the next two years and proposals for new task forces will also be discussed.

## II. The institutional framework of CASD

4. The membership of the Co-ordinating Committee on African Statistical Development comprises 9 African countries selected on basis of geography and linguistic balance, 2 centres representing the Statistical Training Programme for Africa, 8 African and non-African Bilateral

and multilateral Agencies and Donors, and the Secretariat (ECA). Initially, the Bureau of the Joint Conference (Statistics Committee) represented African countries in CASD. The Chairman of the committee is elected from amongst the members.

5. CASD was established in response to the ECA Conference of Ministers Resolution 638(XXV) on the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa. The resolution called upon ECA to convene a working group of international organizations to "further review and elaborate on the principles, objectives and recommendations of the plan". The international organizations were further urged to make effective use of the Joint Conference of African Planners Statisticians and Demographers, of the United Nations ACC sub Committee on Statistical Activities and the Statistical Commission as institutional arrangements to improve coordination among international agencies. The Conference of Ministers noted the establishment of CASD under the sponsorship of the Commission and the United Nations Development Programme at its meeting of April 1992. The Conference further called upon the Executive Secretary to report every two years on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s.

6. The ECA Development Information Services Division (DISD), which has responsibility for statistical development in Africa, acts as the secretariat for and is in its own right a member of CASD.

7. The Conference of Ministers received in 1994, the second progress report from the Joint Conference on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. The Conference noted, with satisfaction, the initiative taken by CASD in promoting statistical development in the region through capacity building in the areas of organization and management of national statistical services, research in methods and standards and data sources, data processing and statistical training. In 1996 the Conference of Ministers received the third progress report, and noted in particular the report on the needs assessment exercise and the strategy development (NASD) programme which were being implemented by CASD. In 1997 the Conference of Ministers decided to meet biennially, and the next progress report will be submitted for consideration at its 1999 meeting.

8. From the foregoing, it should be evident that the Conference of Ministers closely monitors progress on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. The CASD Terms of Reference overall objectives were accordingly formulated with a view to providing information to for the monitoring the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action and to facilitate coordinated action by international actors for Africa's statistical development. It should be noted here that the Joint Conference has effective 1997, been replaced by the Committee for Development Information (CODI). This Committee will, *inter alia*, assume all the responsibilities of the Statistics Committee of the Joint Conference.

### III. Modalities for coordinating implementation of CASD activities

9. CASD has depended on the annual meetings as the principal means for formulating detailed strategies and for coordinating the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. CASD focused its attention on the key priority, namely:

1. organization and management of national statistical services
2. research in methods and standards and data sources
3. data processing
4. statistical training

Four sub-committees, one for each of the four areas, were established by CASD to enable it address the developmental issues in a comprehensive and effective manner. Other areas which were not specifically addressed under any of the above would be kept under review at future CASD meetings.

10. Participation by CASD members in any of the sub-committees was voluntary, underpinned by the need to ensure operational effectiveness and efficiency. Consequently, membership in the subcommittees of the original CASD tended to attract only those donors or agencies implementing or directly involved in the implementation of activities in the four key areas. This had its special advantages: own the ground knowledge on the part the principal actors, their passion for development of statistics, the important contributions they were already

making, and resultant sharing of knowledge and experiences. The problem, however, was how to sustain the momentum of the subcommittees and to bring the numerous ideas and proposals to fruition.

11. In time the subcommittees were found ineffective and were abolished. A new CASD was then reconstituted with revised terms of reference and a new membership structure. In the reconstituted CASD Task Forces were established as the modality for the implementation of activities for co-ordinating the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. Unlike the subcommittees, the Task Forces would address specific and time-limited tasks.

12. The role of the secretariat during the original and reconstituted CASD has remained the same. It is to plan and organise meetings of CASD and co-ordinate activities involving the participation of more than one member. The secretariat also directly implements operational activities at national level and for these activities the secretariat has relied on availability of extrabudgetary resources from both bilateral and multilateral donors.

13. The Bureau of the Joint Conference (Statistics Committee) represented the interests of member States at the original CASD meetings. Currently, although some aspects of subregional representation still remain, member State participation is based on the member State's ability to actively participate in the work of CASD. Thus, for the African states membership "shall take into consideration the following criteria: geographic and linguistic balance, level of statistical development as well as indications that the member State is largely self-supporting with regard to statistical activities". The experience to date is that only a few member States have participated in the CASD meetings and activities.

14. Sensitization of decision-makers was achieved by the introduction of an annual celebration of Africa Statistics Day on 18 November of each year. Member States are expected to use the celebration as one of the means for creating awareness on the importance and contribution of statistics to planning and decision making.

15. Post meeting contact between CASD members has been varied and very rich. Recently

communications have improved further with the advent of electronic mail, establishment of a CASD WEB site, the introduction of a CASD Newsletter, and the direct meetings, which are always possible, when members travel on mission to one or other of the member organizations.

#### IV. Achievements of CASD

16. In the first part of this paper it was noted that questions on the future of CASD have been persistently asked, mainly because of the awesome magnitude of the task and the very limited resources available for its completion. A clear perspective would perhaps be obtained from a numerical and qualitative assessment of the problem. Though desirable, this would not be feasible nor realistic at this stage. Therefore the only possible option at this stage would be an assessment of the achievements of CASD over the last 6 years, specifically the extent to which CASD has achieved its objectives and the impact of its actions.

17. CASD has attained significant achievements in the implementation of its objectives. Six overall objectives were set (see Annex). Achievements under each of the objectives are illustrative of the role that CASD has played over the last six years.

##### (a) Conduct of regular review of the overall progress made by African countries in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s

18. Baseline data on the status of statistical development in most African countries was obtained from a survey of 32 countries which was undertaken just before the 1990 Inter-Agency meeting on co-operation for Statistical Development. The Strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa, using data from these surveys, states that African statistics suffered from poor management, inadequate funding, lack of timeliness in the delivery of outputs, unsatisfactory quality of data produced and liability to respond quickly to new data needs. This statement succinctly presents the problem of African statistics.

19. Success in inter-agency cooperation was attained quite early. The Inter-Agency meeting which is a fore-runner of CASD, quickly established the guidelines for preparing the Strategy for statistical development in Africa. The strategy for the Implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s was eventually prepared and adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers in March 1992.

20. In terms of impact, it is to be noted that the Strategy is used widely by donors and member States as well as academic institutions as a spring-board for planning statistical development in Africa. The Strategy has been used in the preparation of project documents, policy documents and work programmes for statistical activities in the region by ECA, bilateral and multilateral donors and other organizations.

21. Further, several reports have been prepared as a response to the CASD objectives. Those prepared by the ECA and the other agencies include:

- (i) Report on the Regional Survey of Statistical Organization and Training (ECA, 1996)
- (ii) Guidelines for Needs Assessment, (ECA, 1994)
- (iii) Statistical Needs Assessment and Strategy Development: the African Experience (ECA, 1996)
- (iv) Statistical Needs Assessment and Planning: A Review of Approaches and Current Practices, (World Bank, 1995)
- (v) Framework for Monitoring Statistical Development in Africa, (ECA, 1995)
- (vi) Survey of Statistical Development in African countries, (ECA, 1997)
- (vii) Survey on Statistical Activities in African countries, (ECA, 1997)
- (viii) Best Practices in the formulation of Statistical Development Plans, (ECA, 1997)

22. The surveys and reports indicate that CASD has maintained focus on its objectives and implemented actions designed to achieve those objectives. The reports and actions implemented also demonstrate that CASD has effectively addressed its objectives. As to impact, nebulous as this subject is to address, it may be observed, nevertheless that the surveys have been

instrumental in identifying areas for further action. For example, in the area of training seminars on statistical organization were organized by the Munich Centre in Germany and by the Institute for Statistics and Applied Economics in Makerere, Uganda. Other agencies for example the FAO, UNDP, the World Bank, DFID and so on have either funded or organized training for statisticians. At ECA a new post of Regional Advisor on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems was introduced. Further, the World Bank and DFID have supported several African countries in implementing needs assessment surveys. The work on needs assessment led to the formulation of national development plans for statistics. These plans have been used to great advantage by bilateral and multilateral agencies in dialoguing with member States.

(b) Facilitate, with means at its disposal, the implementation of coordinated actions intended to harmonise statistical systems and methodologies; this implementation will be the primary responsibility of the African national and regional institutions, but should obtain the support of bilateral, and multilateral agencies in so far as these actions are part of agreed work programmes.

23. Some notable achievements have been recorded by regional institutions in facilitating coordinated actions for harmonising statistical systems and methodologies. First ECA has actively pursued the implementation of the new 1993 System of National Accounts (1993 SNA) in the region. The status of implementation of the new system has been assessed by the secretariat and milestones on the implementation of the 1993 SNA in the African region have been established. ECA has accordingly conducted several training workshop for African experts in the area of national accounts. Second, the other regional institution in the area of statistics, AFRISTAT has been steadily working on improving methodologies for informal sector statistics, on implementation of the 1993 SNA, and on harmonisation of classifications and methodologies.

24. With regard to impact, it may be noted that a number of countries, including Zimbabwe, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and South Africa are known to have commenced implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts and several other countries are contemplating similar action.



25. CASD is also promoting the establishment at ECA, of a regional household data archive centre with the active support of the World Bank. The centre is expected to act as a dissemination point for African household survey data as well as lead in the promotion of best practices in the management, storage and retrieval of household data.

26. Full facilitation of coordinated actions is only effective if all CASD members participate in the meetings, share information and plan together. The participation of African national institutions, especially national statistical services has not been particularly high since the reconstituted CASD. It would be useful to examine the reasons for this and institute remedial actions. Further, increased participation and increased membership of bilateral and multilateral donors would have had significant positive influences on the facilitation and implementation of coordinated actions.

(c) Set up mechanism for the continuous exchange of information among African governments, national agencies, regional and subregional organizations and all bilateral and multilateral agencies; the CASD secretariat will ensure dissemination of the information to all actors

27. CASD achievements in setting up mechanisms for the continuous exchange of information have been greatly assisted by the advances in technology. In this respect the secretariat has progressed from using the standard postal mailing facilities to use of facsimile machines and over the last couple of years the use of electronic mail and to establishment and maintenance on the internet of a CASD Web-site.

28. At the seventh meeting of CASD a Task Force was established to further promote electronic connectivity first amongst CASD members and then with all the other countries of the region. A CASD internet directory has been prepared for all the CASD members and internet training has been introduced to consolidate efforts in this area. Also, at the last session it was decided to introduce a news letter to report on CASD activities - this newsletter has been completed and is also available on the CASD Web-site. Most of the documentation for the CASD meeting are also available on the web.

29. The impact of actions in the implementation of this objective are now far reaching in terms of speed of dissemination, the large number of users reached and its potential for obtaining fast responses and feedback from both targeted and no-targeted users. Since the introduction of electronic dissemination is relatively new, it is not possible just yet to give an indication of the impact on member States nor on the problem being addressed.

(d) Identify specific Themes on which particular and convergent efforts could be made by those actors and consequently propose lines of actions to all parties

30. Annual Statistics Day celebrations on November 18 have to some extent also been instrumental in creating awareness of the importance of statistics and in drawing attention to emerging issues in statistical development. Each year the secretariat has identified a theme around which to focus attention. Themes identified and around which posters and press releases have been prepared over the past seven years include:-

- ◆ the vital role of statistics in development planning (1991);
- ◆ Statistical development challenges (1992);
- ◆ Building Statistical Capacity in Support of Sustainable Development and Regional Integration (1994);
- ◆ Improvement in the production and dissemination of data for analysis and decision making (1995);
- ◆ Towards Poverty Eradication in Africa: Data and Statistics for Policies and Programmes (1996);
- ◆ Building an Information Society (1997).

31. Preliminary results from the Survey on Statistical development show that 12 countries or 75 per cent of the respondent countries commemorate African Statistics Day. Further, some countries have expressed to the secretariat the importance they accord the Statistics Day celebration and to the themes identified each year in promoting national statistical development.

(e) Inform the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Population and Information Specialists (PSPI) (Joint Conference) on the progress made on various aspects related to the Addis Ababa Plan of Action

32. The secretariat of CASD reports to the Joint Conference on progress made in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action. Up to this point the secretariat has prepared three reports to the Joint Conference, the first one in 1992, the second in 1994 and the last in 1996. It is to be noted that changes to the ECA's intergovernmental machinery were introduced in 1997 and the Conference of Ministers now meets biennially. Furthermore, the Joint Conference has been replaced by a Committee on Development Information (CODI) which will, inter alia, now review and advise on the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISII), statistical development, information science and geographic information systems.

33. Each available opportunity has been used by the secretariat to report to the Joint Conference. Also, as was observed at the 7th CASD meeting, the task of statistical development is of such magnitude that all efforts must be undertaken to motivate the African countries towards new directions in the improvement and development of African Statistics. The potential and possibilities for further action are now more encouraging than before. Technological advances in computers have lowered the cost of data processing and brought the power of computing to the statistician's desk top. Massive volumes of data can now be easily and cheaply stored and manipulated by a statistician at his own desk. The advent of electronic connectivity has revolutionized data collection, transmission and dissemination possibilities. Further, the globalization of the world economy is already impacting on policy and decision makers such that they are increasingly demanding more statistical data, faster availability and higher quality of data.

34. Although CASD has effectively implemented the reporting objective, the impact of this function is difficult to assess. A further assessment of the reporting function will have to be assessed.

(f) Conduct regular evaluation of its own activities

35. The first evaluation of CASD and its activities was undertaken in 1996 by CASD itself. After consideration of the evaluation CASD concluded that:

The Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development was still relevant and therefore CASD, which derived its mandate from the plan still had a role to perform, however, extent to which CASD was monitoring, facilitating, measuring, implementing and evaluating the plan were a subject for further discussion.

36. With regard to the functioning and status of CASD, that meeting noted an increasing overlap between the committees and decided to replace them with Task Forces. CASD further clarified its role vis-a-vis that of the Joint Conference and decided to de-link the relationship between the two in terms of holding their annual meetings at the same time. The meeting then decided to reconstitute the membership of CASD, and revise its terms of reference. It also recognized that the importance of the reporting function to the Joint Conference was an important one further decided to redefine, more clearly, the role of the secretariat with a view to ensuring ECA's commitment to CASD.

37. Several of the recommendations of the evaluation have been implemented. New Terms of Reference of CASD have been introduced, the sub-committees have been abolished and Task Forces introduced. Incorporation of CASD activities into the ECA regular programme of work has been effected and the secretariat was able to mobilize additional extra-budgetary resources, during 1997 for the implementation of CASD activities. Further, the new membership structure has been implemented. However the effectiveness of the reconstituted membership with regard to participation in CASD meetings and activities and the member commitment to those activities does seem to have been fully demonstrated leaving the subject open for further review and discussion.

38. As the end of the 1990s approaches, and as CASD moves into the 21st century, a second evaluation of CASD seems necessary. The objectives of such an evaluation would be to assess

the impact and effectiveness of CASD in:

- (a) elaborating the principles, objectives and recommendations of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa
- (b) formulating detailed strategies for the implantation of the Plan of Action objectives;
- (c) implementing its own terms of reference/objectives and how these dovetail with the Plan of Action objectives.
- (d) the extent to which CASD has succeeded in identifying themes on which particular and convergent actions could be made.

The above areas have been selected because they are central to the Addis Ababa Plan of Action and also because they do not appear to have been adequately addressed.

#### V. Challenges for statistical development in Africa

39. Challenges for statistical development in the 21st century will come from the rapid information technology developments advances and how these and other changes impact on data collection methods, range of statistical data produced and disseminated and the organization of national statistical services. The demand for data may increase drastically as the needs for data for faster decision making increase. The human resources requirements and their management will pose even greater challenges. Methods of work will change and new skills will have to be developed or introduced. Staff mobility is likely to be much higher than has been the case up to this point. All these will bear on the future of African statistical development. CASD may begin to address these challenges now and should begin to proactively identify those "themes on which particular and convergent efforts could be made".

40. The old CASD work programme focused on the four major themes from the Plan of Action, namely (i) organization and management of national statistical services, (ii) research in methods and standards and data sources, (iii) data processing and (iv) statistical training. The reconstituted CASDA areas of focus are expected to change from year to year. Currently these are: (i) Connectivity for statistics, (ii) Monitoring the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action, (iii) Strengthening of the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA) centres, (iv)

Country and regional micro data service units and library, inter alia for poverty monitoring - pilot project, (v) Country - live data base - pilot project. Questions that have to be asked now, is whether new areas should be addressed and prioritization introduced into the work of CASD. Should more attention be given to research and methods and data sources? Which of the programme areas have potential for leveraging African statistical development into the 21st century? Further how is the work of all the other agencies to be identified and included in some kind of a data base? As a Coordinating Committee, one of the most critical roles of CASD is in coordinating activities in the area of statistical development and in promoting information exchange, promotion of best practices and consolidation of the efforts of all the key actors participating in the statistical development of the continent. A question that has to be addressed is whether CASD has indeed promoted the exchange of information on developments pertaining to: first individual countries, and second the role of the key actors and how coordination could be further enhanced.

41. The establishment of CASD work programmes, the task forces and their terms of reference have so far been effective in directing the work of CASD. But since the Task Forces are time limited some consideration may have to be given to the possibility of establishing more CASD specific programmes of work with a higher focus on the co-ordination aspects. Some discussion will also be necessary in drawing up a distinction between the CASD and agency specific activities. It would appear that a delicate balance does exist as to what constitutes the CASD work programme and what constitutes a member's own agency work programme.

42. Even though the modality of Task Forces has been in operation for only one year, the time limited duration of the Task Forces, their specific focus and the clear and achievable objectives are proving to be a great asset. The Task forces make it possible to identify and target areas of priority concern and which are perceived to have potential for influencing developments in related areas.

43. The diversity of the African countries and the different stages of statistical development coupled with varying levels of interest and involvement of partner countries and agencies will require special. CASD work programmes and priorities must inescapably take into account the

progress in individual countries and the contributions of all interested actors.

44. Several global conferences have taken place in the recent past implementation of the recommendations of these conferences have far reaching implications on the national statistical services as they take on additional responsibilities, as well as on the organisation of national statistical services. Piecemeal and uncoordinated efforts to determine these data needs, conceptualization of the ideas, the collection methods, and creation of new entities for the purpose could seriously undermine progress that has already been achieved. Clearly, then, this is one of the areas that CASD will have to address in the future. Several more critical areas for African statistical development will have to be identified.

45. In the immediate future new task forces will be required to consider and plan the evaluation of CASD, assessment of progress achieved in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for statistical development in Africa, implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts in Africa, and the implications of global conferences on African statistical development.

#### VI. Resources for implementation of CASD activities

46. The issue of resources has been discussed at almost all CASD meetings. There has, undoubtedly been some progress particularly with regard to the funding of some CASD activities. Efforts to mobilize additional voluntary resources have been undertaken, again with some positive responses. It is believed that more could be done. It must be pointed out however, that, a programme of work without resources cannot be implemented.

47. Since the impact of CASD would depend on its ability to implement its activities, it is felt that this subject should continue to be addressed until an operational funding mechanism is identified.

## VII. Conclusion

48. This paper has reviewed the origins of CASD, its institutional framework, the modalities of implementing CASD activities and reported on the achievements of CASD. Overall, CASD has made major contributions to the development of African statistics and the roles of individual actors has not been particularly remarkable. However, the potential for reinforcing individual participant activities does not and the role to have been fully exploited. The task of statistical development in Africa is of such magnitude that it cannot be successfully implemented without coordination of the efforts of all the key actors, namely the member States, the regional and sub-regional institutions, bilateral and multilateral partners. Indeed it has been observed that abolition of CASD will not be a solution, as already observed elsewhere, it will be immediately replaced by another similar organ. The challenge to CASD is a formidable one: how to effectively and systematically coordinate the contributions of all the actors and undergird that role with a strategic plan for Africa's statistical development.

## VIII Recommendations

49. The committee is called upon to consider:

- (i) the future role of CASD taking into account the achievements over the last several years and what still remains to be done;
- (ii) the continued relevance of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s and the Strategy for its implementation;
- (iii) preparations for statistical development in Africa in the 21st century;
- (iv) proposals for establishment of new task forces;
- (v) membership of and participation in CASD activities;



- (vi) resources for implementation of CASD activities.

## **Annex**

### **Overall objectives of CASD**

- a) Conduct regular review of the overall progress made by African countries in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan of Action for Statistical Development in Africa in the 1990s;
- b) Facilitate, with means at its disposal, the implementation of coordinated actions intended to harmonize statistical systems and methodologies; this implementation will be the primary responsibility of the African national and regional institutions, but should obtain the support of bilateral, and multilateral agencies in so far as these actions are part of agreed work programmes;
- c) Set up mechanisms for the continuous exchange of information among African governments, national agencies, regional and subregional organizations and all bilateral and multilateral agencies; the CASD secretariat will ensure dissemination of the information to all actors;
- d) Identify specific themes on which particular and convergent efforts could be made by those actors and consequently propose lines of action to all parties;
- e) Inform the Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Population and Information Specialists (PSPI) on the progress made on various aspects related to the Addis Ababa Plan of Action;
- f) Conduct regular evaluation of its own activities.