

**Second Joint Session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices  
and the Statistical Commission for Africa (Statcom-Africa)**

**“Strengthening economic statistics to support Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for  
Sustainable Development”**

**Opening Remarks**

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Representatives of the African Union Commission (AUC)  
Representatives of the African Development Bank (AfDB)  
Representatives of Regional Economic Communities (RECs)  
Representatives of Regional and International Organizations, and  
Development Partners  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Economic Commission for Africa I would like to express our wholehearted appreciation and thanks to the Government and people of Cote d'Ivoire for the warm hospitality graciously accorded to us on this important occasion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Session of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the Statistical Commission for Africa. The presence in our midst today of senior government officials, demonstrates the commitment and leadership of the Government to statistical development, not only in Cote d'Ivoire but across Africa. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Director General of the National Institute of Statistics of Cote d'Ivoire and his staff for their enormous contribution towards the organization of the meeting.

### **Honourable Minister, Distinguished Guests**

The theme of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Session is: *“strengthening economic statistics to support Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”* This theme has been carefully and deliberately chosen in part to devise strategies that address the challenges and opportunities posed to African economic statistics in the era of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. As you are well aware, the SDGs and Agenda 2063 have imposed greater needs and demand for broader and more detailed economic statistics. This new challenge requires additional efforts, from all of us gathered here, to scale-up the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of economic statistics. Thus, your presence here today is a clear indication of the collective commitment we share towards the achievement of sustainable and inclusive development outcomes that are informed by robust economic statistics, which will contribute to improving the livelihoods of the African people.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Economic statistics are critical to capturing the production, expenditure, consumption and many other variables among various economic actors. In Africa, quality, timely, and comparable economic statistics are critical for the continents' agenda on regional integration, structural economic transformation, and sustainable development. In this regard, economic statistics play a fundamental role in evaluating and informing the strategic economic choices facing our Member States in support of formulating macroeconomic policy; monitoring and analyzing macroeconomic trends; assessing the sustainability and inclusiveness of economic growth; as well as engaging in evidence-based decision making.

As you know, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aspires to transform the world in which we live, and forms the new global development framework anchored around 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Similarly, Agenda 2063 sets forth Africa's development priorities, with a pan-African vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena." Both development agenda's encompass three overlapping dimensions: equitable economic growth, social development, and environmental sustainability, all of which are crucially linked to economic statistics.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In light of the increased needs and demand for broader and more detailed economic statistics, let me quickly remind you of the current challenges we are facing in the area of economic statistics in Africa. Statisticians and economists alike are confronted with numerous challenges among which are the growing demand for statistics on new or previously unaccounted economic activities; the need to balance data collection strategies and outputs against limited resources; and the increasing demand for quality, timely, and harmonized statistics by regional and international development initiatives, including the SDGs and Agenda 2063.

In Africa, despite the improvements made in the last decade, economic statistics are still at the early stages of development. The quality, availability, timeliness and harmonization of these statistics vary, depending on the national statistical systems of countries, which is generally fragile and vulnerable. Overall, the problems with the production of economic statistics in Africa stems from the weak statistical capacity and infrastructure of countries.

In addition to the lack of data availability, there are limitations to the compilation, analysis and dissemination of already available economic statistics, such as administrative data. Comprehensively addressing challenges on data compilation and application requires a concerted effort to adapt and adopt international standards and recommendations, including the 2008 System of National Accounts and the development of methodological manuals and guidebooks. Furthermore, additional efforts must be made to train and retain statisticians, as currently there is a lack of official statistics in the training programs of many universities and statistical training centers, and there is high turnover of skilled staff in National Statistics Offices.

Nevertheless, in the face of these challenges, Africa is collectively making significant efforts to improve the quality of economic statistics. During the last decade, several programs and initiatives have contributed to the development of economic statistics on the continent. In many instances the development of these programs and initiatives has directly led to the improvement of macroeconomic measurements on the continent, including the calculation of GDP, the measurement of the informal sector, and the quantitative assessment of regional integration. According to a survey conducted by ECA in 2016, an increasing number of African countries are rebasing their GDP in order to better capture the size, structure and trends of their economy. Only 5 countries reported to having a base year of 2000 or earlier; while 13 countries have a base year of 2001-2005; an additional 24 countries have a base year of 2006-2010; and 4 countries have a base year of 2011-2015. The rebasing of GDP ensures that the price structure is more representative of the economy and a wider basket of products and activities

are considered when national accounts are compiled. A lot more is needed to support countries to rebase their GDP.

In addition to rebasing GDP, countries are making significant strides to implement the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA). The SNA serves as the conceptual and coordinating framework for economic statistics. Moreover, the implementation of the 2008 SNA provides an opportunity to improve the quality, availability, consistency, and harmonization of economic statistics and national accounts. So far 10 countries have reported adopting components of the 2008 SNA; an additional 36 countries are following the 1993 SNA; and only 2 countries are still following the 1968 SNA. Given the scenario it is clear that we need to scale-up technical and financial support to countries to implementation of the 2008 SNA.

Additionally, in order to realize Africa's regional integration agenda, quality economic statistics are needed in the areas of trade and industry, monetary and finance, transportation and energy, and information technology and communication. To facilitate regional integration and policy coordination in Africa, it is critical that countries use the same classifications and methodologies for better cross-country comparisons. In this regard, more should be done to implement the 2008 SNA, which ensures the consistency of definitions and classifications in economic statistics. As illustrated by the launch of the Africa Regional Integration Index, the progress of regional integration must be quantitatively informed by quality, timely and comparable economic statistics.

### **Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the theme of the 2nd Joint Session is *“strengthening economic statistics to support Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*, let me take a moment to address some of the important work being done at ECA in this area.

1. ECA, in collaboration with AUC and AfDB is supporting Member States to implement of the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA) through

the African Project on the 2008 SNA. The Project aims to overcome current statistical weaknesses and strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of Member States to produce timely, quality, and harmonized economic statistics and national accounts in support of good economic governance, regional integration, and sustainable development.

2. ECA, in collaboration with AUC and AfDB has developed an action tool measuring the progress of an Africa's integration in the dimensions of macroeconomics and finance; trade; infrastructure; and the free movement of people. The regional integration Index aims to be an accessible, comprehensive, practical and results-focused tool that focuses on the policy and on-the-ground realities.
3. ECA in collaboration with the OECD, WTO, and WB is working to develop a Trade in Value-Added database for Africa in support of the continents' regional integration and economic transformation agenda. Trade in Value-Added statistics are critical to trade policy formulation, the development of industrial policies, and in shedding light on critical elements of international trade, including: global imbalances, market access, trade and employment, growth and competitiveness, and the environmental impact of trade.
4. ECA has developed 3 technical operational guidebooks: *Guidebook on Using Administrative Data in National Accounts*; *Handbook on Supply and Use Tables*; and *Accounting for Informal Sector for the Compilation of National Accounts*. The drafts of the 3 operational guidebooks have been completed and are currently being edited
5. ECA has included in its work program from 2017, activities to support national statistical offices to make official statistics open by default by operationalizing UN Principle 1 on official statistics

**Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In conclusion the attainment of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 requires a robust monitoring and evaluation framework of economic statistics, to track progress, to monitor national accounts and financial resources allocated to the set priorities, and to assess the overall impact of the key policies and programmes in meeting the set targets of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. To this end, National Statistics Offices must strengthen their technical and institutional capacity to collect, compile, analyze and disseminate national and sub-national economic statistics data. Additionally, national monitoring and evaluation systems need to be integrated into statistical capacity building from the outset so as to ensure a reliable supply of core statistics with which to monitor and evaluate the attainment of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Therefore, the focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Session on economic statistics is timely and will go a long way to improving the state of economic statistics in support of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. In light of the current momentum started at the ASSD and with the aim of achieving the objectives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Session, I urge all of us to actively participate and make this meeting as interactive as possible.

Finally, I wish to reiterate the commitment of the ECA to the partnership with the AUC and AfDB on strong support for the vision of Africa's transformation.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and thank you for your kind attention!

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