



# The African Charter on Statistics in **SEVEN QUESTIONS**



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“The process of integrating the continent that African States started some years ago recommends the use of harmonised and reliable statistical data in all areas of political, social, economic and cultural life, both for monitoring progress towards objectives and measuring results.”

Jean Ping,  
President of the African Union Commission

## 1 What is the African Charter on Statistics?

The African Charter on Statistics is a legal instrument. Its purpose is to regulate statistical activities in the continent and serve as an advocacy tool for the development of statistics in Africa. It was adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on 3 February 2009, following a participatory process in which all members of the African statistical system, African political authorities and development partners took part.

## 2 Why an African Charter on Statistics?

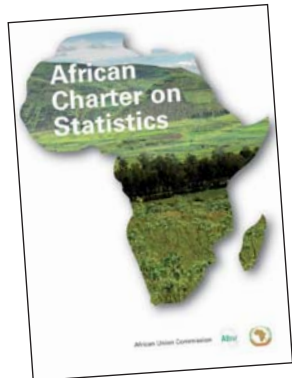
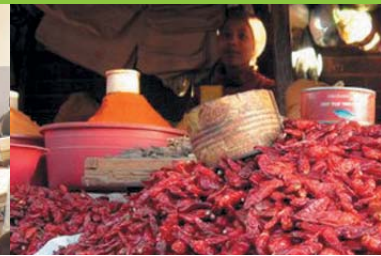
By adopting the Constitutive Act of the African Union in Lome (Togo) on 11 July 2000, the leaders of African countries sought to accelerate the process of continental political and economic integration to ensure Africa will be able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and hold its rightful place on the global stage.

With respect to economic integration that is to lead to the creation of an African Economic Community with an African single currency, in compliance with the treaty adopted in Abuja (Nigeria) in 1991, the steering and monitoring of its implementation and the continuous evaluation of its results require harmonised and reliable statistical data that are produced and disseminated in a timely manner. Such statistics are sorely lacking despite the progress achieved in the last few years. The African Charter on Statistics consists in a strategic guidance framework that is to pave the way for the emergence of such African statistics.

## 3 What are the objectives of the African Charter on Statistics?

The African Charter on Statistics pursues, *inter alia*, the following objectives:

- i) Serve as policy framework and advocacy tool for the development of statistics in Africa;
- ii) To ensure improved quality and comparability of the statistics;
- iii) Strengthen the coordination of statistical activities and facilitate the harmonisation of development partners' interventions in order to avoid duplications in the implementation of statistical programmes;
- iv) Promote compliance with the fundamental principles of public statistics in Africa and a culture of evidence-based policymaking; and
- v) Build up the institutional capacity of African statistical authorities by ensuring their autonomy in operations, while paying attention to adequacy of human, material and financial resources.



## What is the content of the African Charter on Statistics?

The African Charter on Statistics defines the principles governing the activity of the institutions in charge of collecting, producing, disseminating and analysing public statistics as well as the ethical and professional rules of conduct of African statisticians. It also defines the commitments of States Parties that have to accept the principles set out in the Charter to reinforce their policies and their national statistics systems, as well as to commit themselves to adopt appropriate measures, especially legislative, regulatory and administrative, necessary to ensure that their laws and regulations are in conformity with the Charter.

The African Charter on Statistics coordinates the functioning of the African Statistical System, defined as the partnership composed of national statistical systems (data providers, producers and users, statistics research and training institutes and statistics coordination bodies), statistics units of Regional Economic Communities, regional statistics organisations, regional training centres, statistics units of continental organisations and coordination bodies at continental level.

## What are the advantages offered by the African Charter on Statistics?

The African Charter on Statistics does not consist solely in obligations for the States Parties. Its ratification and implementation will enable to meet its objectives and in particular will:

- i) Ensure improved quality and comparability of the statistics required to monitor national policies and economic and social integration process in Africa. Better data quality, comparability, as well as continuity and timeliness of dissemination will help Member States to elaborate relevant national policies, but also to better play their role in regional, continental and international exchanges as the harmonisation of African statistics needs to be compatible with international norms. They will enable the Regional Economic Communities which are the pillars of African integration to reach their objectives and better measure their achievements. They will also enable governments to better inform their citizens, parliamentarians to better monitor their Government action and citizens to better assess the achievements of national policies and play a proactive role in promoting and consolidating democracy and good governance;
- ii) Promote a culture of evidence-based policy formulation as statistical information will be produced in a more regular way while it will be more relevant, accessible and comprehensible;
- iii) Provide an efficient advocacy tool to increase resources and support needed to develop statistical activities;
- iv) Provide African statistical organisations and statisticians with an adequate legal framework as well as ethical and professional rules of conduct.



## How is the African Charter on Statistics different from previous African initiatives in the field?

Unlike other African initiatives in the field of statistics that set out recommendations adopted at a ministerial level, the African Charter on Statistics is a binding legal instrument, as it is an international treaty adopted by the Heads of State and Government and is subject to ratification by the Member States of the African Union. By ratifying the Charter, States parties pledge to take appropriate measures required to ensure compliance with it, even if this entails modifying their national legislation. By making this choice, African leaders have made a far-reaching move since they are putting the development of African statistics at the centre of the continent's political agenda.

## When will the African Charter on Statistics enter in force?

The African Charter on Statistics shall enter in force thirty (30) days after the ratification instruments are deposited by fifteen (15) States Parties. An advocacy strategy has been elaborated in order to fast-track the signature and ratification process.

AFRICAN UNION

الاتحاد الأفريقي



UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
P. O. Box 3243  
Telephone: 5517 700 • Fax: 5517844

Website:

<http://www.au.int>