

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Directors-General of the National Statistics Offices vows to boost intra-Africa trade by using statistical information



The 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee of Directors-General of the National Statistics Offices (CoDGs), opens on December, 13, 2023, at the African Union HQ, under the AU 2023 theme “Acceleration of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Implementation”.

Opening the meeting, on behalf of H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, AUC Chairperson (AUC), Mrs. Botho Kebabonye Bayendi, Director of Office of Strategic Planning and Delivery and Acting Executive Director of the African Union Institute for Statistics (STATAFRIC), highlighted the commitment demonstrated by the AUC to provide the necessary support to AU Member States to strengthen their capacities for the production and dissemination of harmonized, quality and updated statistics.

She reminded the participants of the major milestones taken for statistical development in Africa including: the adoption of the [African Charter on Statistics in 2009](#), the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) in 2010, as well as the [Second Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa \(SHaSA 2\) in 2018](#).

“The implementation of Agenda 2063 cannot be effective, provided that Africa has reliable, real-time statistics. These statistics must be produced by the African statistical system and by Africans statisticians themselves,” she said, calling for the ratification of the Charter by the 55 AU Member States, which will allow the various stakeholders

of the African statistical system to have an adequate legal instrument for the production and dissemination of quality statistics for Africa.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Chair of the Committee of Directors-General of the National Statistics Offices, Mr. Ricardo Nsue Ndemesogo Obono, Director General, National Institute of Statistics, Equatorial Guinea noted that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a flagship project of Agenda 2063 selected in this year 2023 by Heads of State and Government of the African Union, and it aimed at creating a single African market for goods and services facilitated by free movement of persons, capital, investment to deepen economic integration, promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality, industrialization, agricultural development, food security, and structural transformation. He highlighted the need for reliable statistical data to evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken by African Leaders to boost the Intra African trade. "There is a need to get comprehensive, detailed and reliable statistics on merchandise trade in African Union. Moreover, detailed Intra and Extra African Union trade statistics are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken by African leaders to boost Intra African trade, which have a high impact for the economic development of the continent".

The Chair of the Committee of Directors-General of the National Statistics Offices concluded by reminding participants about main objectives of the CoDGs that focus on the Acceleration of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Implementation, and include among others to : (i) Provide a forum for member states to review and advise on the statistical programmes of the pan-African institutions (STATAFRIC of the AUC, African Centre of Statistics of the ECA and Department of Statistics of the AfDB) based on SHaSA 2 guidelines, and ensure their relevance to the needs of African countries; (ii) Guide on the way to eliminate trade barriers and boost intra-Africa trade by using statistical information; (iii) Discuss challenges related to the acceleration of African AfCFTA through statistics in Africa; (iv) Discuss the challenges of producing data on Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); (v) Ensure the coordination of statistical work of the various actors and mechanisms and their implementation in the continent; and (vi) Examine progress, identify problems, and propose solutions to existing and emerging issues on statistical development in Africa.

Addressing the opening ceremony Dr. Beker Shale, the Director General for Ethiopian Statistics Services welcomed the participants of the session on behalf of the government and people of Ethiopia. He underlines the importance of the meeting in accelerating Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 by providing statistical data to enable evidence-informed policy.

Speaking on behalf of Mr. Oliver Chinganya, Director of the African Centre for Statistics, Mr. Ilboudo Joseph from the African Centre for Statistics, commended that the choice of the theme for this year CoDGs meeting is closely linked to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). He noted that Trade in value-added (TiVA) tool can support and contribute towards unlocking the potential of services trade in Africa, especially towards an effective implementation of the AfCFTA. .

Mr. Ben Paul Mungyereza, Manager, Statistical Capacity Building Division on behalf of Mr. Koua Louis Kouakou, Manager, Economic and Social Statistics Division at the African Development Bank (AfDB) spoke about the Africa Information Highway (AIH) initiative of the AfDB to support the implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA).

Organized by the AUC (STATAFRIC) as statutory meeting of African Union, the CoDGs 17<sup>th</sup> Session will deliberate, over three days, statistical development in Africa. In particular, sessions will discuss the progress made on the implementation of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, exchange of experiences and best practices on the efforts by regional, and international organizations as well as on countries' efforts in their quest to support their national, regional, and international development. One of the topics will include revisit the International Merchandise Trade and Statistics (IMTS) and Informal Cross Border Trade (ICBT) knowledge & experience. In relation to the AU Theme of the Year 2023 theme: "Acceleration of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Implementation", Reports of the Specialized Technical Group and on the AfCFTA will be presented and discussed. The session will also review statutory and emerging matters on statistics as well as statistical coordination in Africa and key indicators that should be tracking to assess progress and achievements of achieving the desired trade patterns.

The Session was attended by directors general of the national statistical offices from AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities, statistics training centers, regional and African organizations, UN agencies, sub-regional, regional and international, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, and others.

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