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STATEMENT BY

**H.E. DR. ANTHONY MOTHAE MARUPING
COMMISSIONER FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS**

**AT THE
JOINT SESSION OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICES AND
THE FOURTH STATSTICAL COMMISION FOR AFRICA**

**10 DECEMBER 2014
TUNIS, TUNISIA**

H. E. Mr. Nouredine Ben Zekri, State Minister of International Cooperation of the Republic of Tunisia

Mr. Saidi Hedi, Director General of Statistics of Tunisia

Directors General of Statistics

Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Representatives of the African Development Bank

Representatives of the Government of Tunisia

Representatives of various Partners

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

- I wish to welcome you on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission all to this first Joint session of the Eighth meeting of the Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices and the fourth Statistical Commission for Africa, taking place in this beautiful and historical city of Tunis. It is the home of the great Africa General and field Marshall, Hannibal. Two ecumenical Councils took place here, in Carthage. Many more historical milestones occurred in this city. What a venue to host genesis of global data revolution and the birth of Pan – African Institute of Statistics.
- May I also thank you all most sincerely for sparing time to attend this important meeting; indeed a clear and indisputable manifestation of your firm commitment to the development of world class statistics in Africa. The demand for statistics that are adequate in scope, timely and accurate and therefore reliable is the yearning of the entire world. We are here to answer that calling.
- Profound gratitude goes to the authorities and the People of Tunisia for their ever warm welcome and unrivaled hospitality.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

- Since 2006, the AUC has been organizing the Committee of DGs meeting, which is an important annual gathering of Heads of National Statistics Offices (NSOs) and of all major statistical organizations and professional statisticians across the continent. Since then AUC has joined hands with AfDB and UNECA.

- This gathering provides a common platform for discussion among key players in the African statistics fraternity, thus ensuring a coordinated and systematic way of addressing the continent's development needs through statistics.
- The theme of this meeting: "***Strengthening the production of agricultural statistics in Africa for better monitoring and evaluation of CAADP***", is timely and pertinent. First it is directly linked with the theme of the 23rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government Summit in Addis Ababa,, that put agriculture and food security at the center, secondly put 2014 as the year for African Union for Agriculture and Food Security and thirdly, observed that production of agricultural statistics is limited on the continent despite the development of the Africa implementation Strategy and Roadmap to facilitate the translation of the 2025 Vision and goals of the Africa Accelerated Agriculture Growth and transformation into concrete result and impact for improving statistics for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development in Africa by AUC, AfDB, ECA and FAO.
- Not many African countries produce quality statistics and updates on agriculture, while agricultural censuses and surveys are becoming increasingly rare despite pleas from Pan-African organizations and FAO for urgent need for the revival of agricultural statistics.
- In order to have a timely and reliable data on agricultural statistics, it is imperative to support countries in undertaking assessments of current practices in collecting, compiling and disseminating agricultural statistics in Africa.
- During the next three days meeting, the Africa will be expecting from You, Actors of Statistics on the continent, to map the way forward towards overcoming the challenges faced, ways and means and concrete recommendations to strengthen the production of quality agriculture statistics and including how this can be fitted neatly into the Malabo Declaration commitments, implementation of Strategy and Roadmap and CAADP results Framework 2015-2025. This will be fundamental to realize the vision of a transformed African Agriculture by 2025; the agriculture that will:
 - be characterized by its ability to achieve prosperity for improved livelihoods of African citizens;
 - create jobs for many, particularly youth and women;
 - provide the example of facilitating a faster intra-African trade;
 - make most of Africa households resilient to external shocks
 - end hunger and contribute to poverty reduction by 2025
- Then we will be able to characterize the agriculture we want by 2025 in the context of Africa Agenda 2063..

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

- The African Union Commission in close collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, is currently working on developing an Africa regional Integration Index.
- This is a response to the calls by the Sixth Joint Annual Meetings of African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, in April 2013 and the sixth Conference of African Ministers in charge of Integration, held in Port Louis, Mauritius, in May 2013 for indicators of regional integration in Africa.
- This initiative is the implementation of the January 2014 AU Summit of Heads of States and Government, which called for the establishment of an integration observatory and development of a harmonized framework to scientifically assess the implementation of the integration process, using integration indicators and common benchmarks of evaluation and assessment, based on the African Agenda 2063.
- The main objective will be to develop an index of African regional integration which will be a reference for African Governments in measuring progress towards realization of the agreed vision of an integrated Africa as stipulated in the Abuja treaty.
- Development of such an index requires accurate data and information from the member States and other key institutions, which are key players in implementation regional integration agenda. As Directors General, I call upon your support for realizing timely completion of the implementation of this programme.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

- As you all are well aware the OAU/AU fiftieth anniversary celebration in May 2013 offered African leaders fresh opportunity to recommit the creation of necessary conditions for the emergence of a new Africa by the year 2063.
- To attain this noble objective, the formulation of Africa Agenda 2063 was initiated and is structured around several programmes that call for effort on the part of all Africans. Agenda 2063 is based on constitutive instruments of the Union, existing African frameworks and programmes, the solemn declaration of the 50th OAU/AU Anniversary, the study of regional and national strategic plans as well as on the consultations with a wide spectrum of African stakeholders and the diaspora. It is a people's document. It is yet to be formally adopted by the AU Summit. That should be done in January 2015.
- This initiative is being crafted at a time when the international community is brainstorming what could be the outlines of the post-2015 development agenda. Africa, for its part, has identified its priorities which revolve around six major pillars, as reflected in CAP for P2015 Development Agenda :

- i) Structural economic transformation and inclusive growth;
 - (ii) Science, technology and innovation;
 - (iii) People-centered development;
 - (iv) Environmental sustainability, natural resources management, and disaster risk management;
 - (v) Peace and security; and
 - (vi) finance and partnerships;
- A number of key enablers are meticulously enumerated in CAP, such as good governance, transparency and fighting corruption; human rights for all; a credible participatory process; monitoring and evaluation; traditional knowledge; capacity development; among others, for the betterment of the life of African peoples.
- Agenda 2063 is broader and will certainly encapsulate global Post 2015 development Agenda and SDGs. Agenda 2063 will be the carrier of global P2015 D A, SDGs and much more on the African front.
- This Africa's new ambition is expected to help to resolutely address the root causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality and thereby enable the Continent's sons and daughters to realize their dreams and achieve social development in an emerging and peaceful Africa. Empowerment of women, engagement of youth, accommodation of people with disability and sustainability are considered to be cross cutting issues.
- In this regard, it is being envisaged to establish a global partnership for statistical capacity building in the continent for the proper conduct and effectiveness of the initiatives, and by so doing ensure the said initiatives attain the set objectives.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- With the advent of the Post-2015 development agenda and the accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on the African front the Africa Agenda 2063, a revolution in statistical activity is imperative on the African Continent and at all levels and stages of the development process to inform decisions and to make the necessary adjustments to ensure meaningful accountability.
- As we are well aware, Africa has a high level of usage of Mobile technology. This can be used for strengthening the capacity of African countries to collect direly needed data across the continent for effective policy formulation, implementation and review and adequately informed decision making in general.
- Production of official statistics is the exclusive mandate of national statistics authorities. It is these authorities that have the legal mandate to gather and compile national data, and this is a matter of national sovereignty.

- Similarly, official statistics production across Africa should be the purview of a Pan-African institution that has the relevant legitimacy. It was for this reason that the Heads of State and Government found it necessary to take the decision to endow the Continent with an Institute for statistics; the primary role of which is to coordinate and regulate the African statistical system to produce official statistics on Africa mainly through the collection, harmonization, aggregation and publication of data produced by National Statistics offices.
- The Institute will work with the RECs and partners in the implementation of the Charter, and SHaSA which is the reference strategic framework for coordination of statistical activities on the Continent to meet the needs of all the organs of the African Union and of all potential users including policy makers, development partners, the civil society, and the world at large.
- To this end, the Institute is expected to bring the African statistical system to the level where it can accurately speak a common statistical language for statistical concepts, methods, structures and standards.
- As we may recall, during the seventh Committee of Directors General of National Statistics Offices in Johannesburg, South Africa, the draft 2015-2018 strategic plan of the Institute of Statistics was duly reviewed and adopted...
- This year, I visited Tunisia in August 2014 and met with the Hon. Minister of Economy and Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs. During my visit, Tunisian authorities showed keen interest and firm commitment to host the Institute. They have already provided a building and budget for its operationalization in 2015.
- Subject to meeting conditions laid down the 22nd Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 30 to 31 January 2014, adopted the decision to establish a Pan-African statistical Training Centre to be based in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, and requested the African Union Commission in collaboration with ECA, AfDB, ACBF and the Ivorian authorities to take measures necessary for successful establishment and satisfactory hosting of the Centre.
- To this end the Commission is currently working with DFID on the institutional arrangement and structural organization of the Institute and the training centre. The Commission is also developing a roadmap for the setting up of the Institute and training centre. This includes outlining of key priority activities, strategy for advocacy and promotion at political level for support to fast-track the establishment of the Institute and Centre once requisite conditions are met.
- The Commission is working towards the operationalization of the Institute. A comprehensive report will be prepared for consideration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2015. I would like to call upon all of you to support

all efforts afoot to improve statistics on the continent. This noble ambition should be made a reality.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

- The agenda before you covers a wide range of topics, including production of agricultural statistics in Africa, Africa regional integration index, review of the implementation of the African Charter on Statistics and the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) as well as the operationalization of the African Union Institute for Statistics and the Pan-African Statistical Training Centre.
- Therefore, it is my sincere hope that you will leave Tunis having reached consensus on these important issues and having defined the way forward.
- In conclusion, I wish to commend the excellent collaboration that existed among the Government of the Republic of Tunisia, the ECA, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the African Union Commission (AUC) in during the preparations for this meeting and now in its co - ordination.
- I also would like to congratulate countries; which have signed and ratified the African charter on Statistics and call up on countries; which have not done so to expedite the process of signing and ratification of the charter.
- I thank you all for your kind attention and wish this first joint meeting of the Committee of DGs and StatCom Africa fruitful deliberations.