

**THE OPENING REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICE  
PRESIDENT AT THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF  
DIRECTOR GENERALS (CODGS) OF AFRICAN UNION MEMBER  
STATES**

**9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2024**

Honourable Cabinet Ministers here present

Chairman National Statistics Council

The Statistician General

Director, African Centre for Statistics (UNECA)

Director, Department of Statistics (AfDB)

Acting Executive Director of STATAFRIC

Heads of UN Agencies here present

Distinguished Delegates

The press

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols respectfully observed

Good morning to you all.

As a former planner, statistician, educationist, and member of the National Statistics Council of The Gambia, it is my great pleasure to join you this morning for the opening session of this important meeting of the Committee of Director Generals (CoDGs) of African Union Member States. On behalf of the President of the Republic of The Gambia, His Excellency Mr. Adama Barrow, the Government, and the People of The Gambia, I warmly welcome you to the Gambia, affectionately known as the *Smiling Coast of Africa*. I trust your stay will be enjoyable and memorable, and your engagements will be fruitful.

### **Distinguished Guests,**

This year's African Union theme, "*Educate and Skill Africa for the 21st Century*," and the African Statistics Day theme, "*Supporting Education by Modernizing the Production of Fit-for-Purpose Statistics*," underscore the central role of education and data in

shaping the future of our continent. These themes align with the outcomes of the 2022 UN Summit on Transforming Education, which sought to address the global education crisis and advance progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

Africa, like other regions, faces significant challenges in achieving SDG 4, requiring collective efforts to transform our education systems. Modernizing the production of fit-for-purpose statistics is vital for informed decision-making, effective policy implementation, and addressing critical issues such as access, quality, and equity in education.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

Modernizing our data ecosystems is essential for producing timely, accurate, and relevant statistics that reflect Africa's unique challenges and opportunities. Leveraging advanced data collection methods such as digital surveys, mobile data collection, and

administrative systems will significantly enhance the quality and relevance of our statistics. I implore all African nations to prioritize investments in statistical modernization, as this is critical for achieving sustainable development goals and driving economic growth.

National statistical systems must also be equipped to meet the growing data demands arising from the SDGs, AU Agenda 2063, the African Development Bank's 10-Year Strategy (2024–2033), and national development plans. Failure to modernize risks undermining our ability to respond effectively to these frameworks.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The African Charter on Statistics and the second Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa provide guiding frameworks for ensuring comparability and consistency of statistics across the continent. While challenges remain, Africa has the capacity to

overcome them. I encourage fostering South-South cooperation to facilitate cost-effective knowledge and skills transfer, particularly for critical activities such as digital population and housing censuses.

However, disparities persist in the production of key statistics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Balance of Payments and International Investment Position (BoP-IIP). While some nations are preparing to adopt the 2025 System of National Accounts (SNA), others remain on older frameworks. I urge Pan-African institutions and Regional Economic Communities to support countries lagging behind by equipping them with tools and resources to produce data that reflects current realities.

### **Distinguished Delegates,**

As a former producer and user of statistics, I am acutely aware of the criticisms often directed at the data you produce. I encourage continuous engagement with the media to raise awareness of the

importance of your work and the methodologies you employ. Transparent communication can help build trust and understanding among stakeholders.

In The Gambia, we have made significant strides in digitalizing our systems through partnerships with the World Bank, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNECA. Additionally, we are enhancing capacity in big data utilization to complement traditional data sources for more robust policy formulation.

### **In Conclusion,**

I call on Pan-African institutions and Regional Economic Communities to collaborate with national statistical systems to support the production of reliable, timely, and high-quality statistics. Such efforts will enhance comparability, reduce duplication, and optimize resource use, ensuring informed decision-making and effective policy implementation across the continent.

With these remarks, I officially declare this session open.

I wish you fruitful deliberations, a pleasant stay in The Gambia, and safe travels back to your respective countries.

Thank you for your attention.