

**Economic and Social Council**

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Economic Commission for Africa
Forum on African Statistical Development
Twelfth meeting

Addis Ababa (hybrid), 20 October 2026

Concept note**I. Background**

1. The Forum on African Statistical Development is an initiative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), working in partnership with the African Union Commission, and is supported by the African Union Institute for Statistics, the African Development Bank, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, and the World Bank. Representatives of 12 international organizations, 4 donor institutions and 17 regional and subregional agencies attended the first meeting of the Forum, held in Addis Ababa in May 2004. They endorsed the establishment of the Forum, with the following main functions:

(a) To have an overview of statistical activities, including training and non-human capacity assistance in Africa;

(b) To set up a permanent system for monitoring statistical development in Africa;

(c) To strengthen modalities for cooperation, with a view to leveraging each partner's comparative advantage.

2. Since its establishment, the Forum has served as a platform for reviewing statistical development efforts in Africa and strengthening coordination among stakeholders. It brings together representatives of African national statistics offices, international, regional and subregional institutions, bilateral agencies, international programmes and initiatives, foundations and other institutions. By bringing these bodies together, the Forum is aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of support for national statistical systems under the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

3. Over the years, the Forum has evolved in response to emerging challenges and priorities in statistical development. Participants at its earlier meetings focused on coordination, monitoring and aid effectiveness, while participants at its more recent sessions have addressed transformation, modernization and innovation in official statistics. At the eleventh meeting, held in 2024, emphasis was placed on the mobilization of technical and financial resources to support innovation in statistical development. After 11 convocations of the Forum, however, its follow-up mechanisms have remained relatively weak: it has often been difficult to determine the extent to which recommendations adopted at one meeting were implemented before the next.

4. Significant challenges persist in three interrelated areas: financing, coordination among partners, and translation of commitments into tangible, country-level outcomes. Where financing is concerned, statistical systems remain modest relative to their central role in development planning,



monitoring and policy. The 2025 edition of the *PARIS21 Partner Report on Support to Statistics: Maintaining Momentum to Protect Hard-Won Gains* indicates that official development assistance for data and statistics represented only 0.25 per cent of the total such assistance disbursed by Development Assistance Committee donors in 2023. Global disbursement for data and statistics is projected to decline from \$1,145 million in 2023 to between \$866 million and \$948 million in 2025. Funding for data and statistics initiatives in Africa amounted to \$497 million.¹

5. At the country level, the Togo country report on support for statistics indicated that domestic resources accounted for only 16 per cent of the country's total statistical financing. National statistical systems remain highly dependent on external financing, although, in several countries, the national budget allocations to the national statistical systems exceeded the minimum threshold recommended by the African Union of 0.15 per cent of the national budget. Furthermore, the overall financing requirements for the implementation of the continental statistical strategy – approximately \$11 billion – remain far higher than the resources mobilized to date (\$.4 billion).² Renewed advocacy is therefore needed for domestic resource mobilization, innovative financing mechanisms and reinforcement of the 0.15 per cent benchmark as a continental reference point.

6. Where coordination is concerned, partners supporting statistical development on the continent have recognized the persistence of duplication and insufficient harmonization. At a side meeting on the margins of the eighteenth session of the Committee of Directors-General of National Statistics Offices of States members of the African Union, held in December 2024 in Banjul, partners identified these as operational problems requiring corrective mechanisms such as a harmonized, shared work programme and regular partner dialogue. This recommendation remains to be operationalized, however. At 63 per cent, the implementation rate of the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, 2017–2026, underscores the shortfall in the conversion of continental commitments into operational results. Experience shows that coordination is most effective when it moves beyond being an objective in itself and is organized around specific vehicles such as a joint project, a co-financing arrangement, a shared product and common standards, and when it is pursued at all relevant levels: among partners, between partners and regional agencies, among pan-African institutions, and within and between countries and regional economic communities.

7. Where delivery is concerned, the growing demand for integrated geospatial data that are timely and disaggregated and for policy-relevant data that are driven by national development priorities stemming from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and by Agenda 2063, The Africa We Want, of the African Union is placing increasing pressure on national statistical systems to deliver high-quality and trusted statistics. During the preparation of continental progress assessments under the first 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063, the absence of baseline or current values prevented performance computations for some targets, while differences in datasets and methods across member States constrained the production of comparable aggregates. The consequent limitations are further evidenced by the score of 51.6 per cent registered in the data situation index of the African Centre for Statistics,³ with data disaggregation recording the lowest component score at 48.8. Emerging technological developments have taken many members of ECA

¹ Available at <https://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-11/press-2025.pdf>. The 2026 report has not yet been released.

² Minutes of coordination meeting with the African Union Institute for Statistics held on 8 July 2026 (unpublished).

³ https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/sites/default/files/resources/documents/acs/statcom9/newsletter/day_three_statcom-africa_ix_newsletter.pdf.

by surprise, and the continent remains insufficiently prepared to support national statistical offices in this area; capacity constraints, limited staffing, and insufficient data infrastructure remain key obstacles to delivery.

8. Beyond production, data use remains an important area for continued improvement. Pillar 1 of the World Bank Statistical Performance Indicators assesses data use by legislatures, executive institutions, civil society, universities and international organizations. The data for 2024 reveal that 12 of the 54 countries in Africa have scores of no higher than 50 per cent in the area of data use. Statistical transformation must be measured not only by the volume of data produced but by the extent to which data are used in decision-making. This calls for stronger emphasis on modernization, data integration and capacity to harness alternative and emerging data sources – including administrative data, geospatial and Earth observation resources, big data and artificial intelligence in response to national, regional and global data demands. These sources should complement, not replace, foundational ground data such as censuses and surveys.

9. Against this backdrop, the twelfth meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development is being convened under the theme “From commitments to delivery: financing, coordinating and monitoring the transformation of African statistical systems”, with the aim of moving beyond commitments and resource mobilization to tangible and monitored results. The commitments referred to in the theme are the collective commitments of members of ECA, development partners and pan-African institutions to deliver on statistical development, beyond the institutional effectiveness of the Forum. The twelfth meeting of the Forum offers a strategic opportunity to recalibrate the partnership architecture around shared priorities, clearer accountability and coordinated delivery, ensuring that partner support is translated into tangible, country-led statistical transformation across Africa. The Forum will be focused on strengthening implementation, enhancing accountability and ensuring that statistical systems are adequately financed, trusted, and better prepared for current and future challenges.

II. Objectives

10. The overall objective of the twelfth meeting is to provide a space for countries, partners and institutions that support statistics to address the technical and financial needs of national statistical systems, with a view to accelerating the modernization of those systems through better monitored actions that support country-led delivery.

11. The specific objectives of the meeting are:

(a) To review and take stock of progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the eleventh meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development and of previous continental commitments on the financing, coordination, and modernization of African statistical systems, and to identify the gaps that remain;

(b) To take stock of the opportunities and mechanisms offered by pan-African institutions, partners and organizations for resource mobilization, financing (including co-financing and joint initiatives), and partner coordination to support countries’ statistical development;

(c) To identify practical priorities for strengthening data use, modernization efforts and integration, and the responsible adoption of alternative and emerging data sources, including artificial intelligence, in African official statistics;

- (d) To agree on renewed, monitorable commitments for the next two years and on a follow-up mechanism to track their implementation between successive sessions of the Forum.

III. Expected outcomes

- 12. The meeting is expected to achieve the following outcomes:
 - (a) Shared understanding among members of ECA and partners of progress against the commitments made at the eleventh meeting of the Forum and the main gaps that still need to be addressed;
 - (b) Greater awareness of the opportunities and mechanisms offered by pan-African institutions and partners, including co-financing arrangements, joint initiatives, common standards and shared products to support countries in their statistical development;
 - (c) Deeper understanding among pan-African institutions and partners of the persistent challenges faced by countries in Africa, and also of their statistical development needs;
- 13. A communiqué setting out the recommendations made by participants during the meeting will be submitted for endorsement by the Statistical Commission for Africa at its tenth session, which will be held in Addis Ababa from 21 to 23 October 2026.

IV. Venue and date

- 14. The meeting is scheduled to be held at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa on 20 October 2026, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m..

V. Format

- 15. The primary topics to be considered at the Forum will include:
 - (a) Progress and gaps in, and renewed commitment to, the implementation of the recommendations of the Forum on African Statistical Development;
 - (b) Formation of partnerships to advance the African statistical system, including the convergence of regional frameworks with the needs of countries and the support of partners;
 - (c) Efficiency of support from partners, tangible coordination vehicles, sustainable financing, data use and the responsible adoption of emerging data sources and technologies.

VI. Target audience

- 16. Participants will include representatives of national statistics offices, ministries responsible for planning and finance, international, regional and subregional organizations, pan-African institutions, development partners, academic institutions, including statistical training centres, and other stakeholders involved in statistical development in Africa.

VII. Secretariat and other services

- 17. ECA, as the secretariat of the Forum, will provide support for the meeting.

VIII. Contact information:

18. For further information, please contact the following:

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