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Economic Commission for Africa
Forum on African Statistical Development
Twelfth meeting
Addis Ababa (hybrid), 20 October 2026

Agenda item 4
Recommendations, communiqué and closing of the meeting

Draft communiqué

1. Representatives of African countries, the Economic Commission for Africa, other entities of the United Nations system, the World Bank, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, regional economic communities and other regional and subregional organizations, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, statistical training centres, development partners and other institutions attended the twelfth meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development, held in Addis Ababa on 20 October 2026.

2. The meeting was held under the theme “From commitments to delivery: financing, coordinating and monitoring the transformation of African statistical systems”.

3. The overall objective of the twelfth meeting was 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.

4. The specific objectives of the meeting were:

(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 for the responsible adoption of alternative and emerging data sources, including artificial intelligence, in African official statistics;

(d) To agree on renewed, verifiable commitments for the subsequent two years and on a follow-up mechanism for tracking the attainment of those commitments between successive meetings of the Forum.

5. The Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the Partnership in

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Statistics for Development in the 21st Century were commended for having organized the twelfth meeting.

6. Meeting participants reaffirmed the Forum's role in connecting national statistical systems with pan-African institutions and with development partners, in coordinating support and in identifying statistical capacity-development gaps. In addition, however, they agreed that the future relevance of the Forum would depend upon a change in its focus from recommendations to measurable implementation.

7. Participants noted that it had been clear from evidence presented at the meeting that the implementation of previous recommendations remained slow. Of 32 responding States, only 2 had reported implementation levels above 80 per cent, while 11 remained at the early stages of implementation. Meanwhile, only 4 had reported that the communiqué of the eleventh meeting had been fully incorporated into their institutional work programmes. The findings presented at the meeting had been indicative rather than comprehensive.

8. Acknowledging that progress had been made in implementing national statistical strategies, carrying out digital statistical operations and increasing the use of administrative, geospatial and other data, participants underscored that, nonetheless, inadequate financing, fragmented assistance, gaps in infrastructure and skills, weak coordination and the limited institutionalization of successful initiatives continued to impede delivery.

9. Participants expressed concern that political support for statistical programmes had not consistently translated into predictable budgets. While 66 per cent of responding States had rated political will as high or very high, only 28 per cent had reported a national strategy for the development of statistics that was fully funded from domestic resources.

10. Participants called upon Governments to recognize official statistics as essential public infrastructure and to steadily increase predictable domestic financing for statistical development, including dedicated budget allocations for statistical infrastructure, statistical operations, systems maintenance and workforce development, in order to reduce dependence on externally funded, project-based statistical initiatives.

11. African countries were urged to strengthen the institutional model of national statistical offices and their coordinating role, as well as to update laws related to statistics, to establish and optimize data governance frameworks, to improve data-sharing arrangements and to modernize technological infrastructure, all with a view to enabling secure and responsible access to data from public and non-public sources, including citizen-generated data.

12. Participants highlighted that a review of 36 national statistical strategies had shown that country needs were systemic, encompassing such fundamental matters as financing, governance, legislation, coordination, personnel, infrastructure, production, quality assurance, dissemination and data literacy. It was impossible for isolated projects to meet those interconnected requirements and support should strengthen national statistical systems in their entirety.

13. Participants agreed that national strategies for the development of statistics should serve as the principal framework for organizing assistance. Accordingly, they encouraged countries to maintain current and costed strategies, to align those strategies with national development plans and medium-term expenditure frameworks and to report annually on implementation, domestic allocations and financing gaps.

14. Participants requested development partners to align predictable, multi-year technical and financial assistance with country-owned priorities; to move away from fragmented, short-term interventions; and to identify, in their

programmes, the relevant national strategic actions, responsible institutions, financing lines, implementation periods and expected country-level results.

15. Welcoming the substantial support provided by regional and international partners, participants noted that such support was often unevenly documented and insufficiently coordinated. National statistical offices should lead country-level coordination through government-led statistical committees, technical mechanisms and regular partner dialogue, thereby reducing instances of duplicated projects, repeated missions and multiple reporting requirements.

16. Pan-African institutions and development partners were requested to develop a map of partner support, which should be updated in real time and should show country coverage, eligibility, access routes, financing modalities, focal points, delivery responsibilities, timelines and measurable results, with a particular focus on fragile, conflict-affected and otherwise underserved statistical systems.

17. Participants recognized the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence, administrative data, geospatial information and other emerging sources. They emphasized that innovation should complement rather than replace censuses, surveys, civil registration and vital statistics, administrative systems and other foundational statistical programmes. In that regard, countries should strengthen the integration of census, survey, administrative, sectoral and geospatial information, supported by common data standards, metadata frameworks, secure application programming interfaces and institutional data-sharing agreements.

18. Participants also recognized the opportunities offered by emerging data sources, such as administrative data and geospatial information, and by capabilities such as artificial intelligence, as potential complements to standard survey processes. Moreover, they underscored the need for national statistical offices to coordinate, validate and integrate such data in accordance with standards for statistical quality, privacy and data protection, security, transparency and accountability, in order to build trust in the credibility of the statistics produced.

19. Participants noted that artificial intelligence and data science represented the largest reported capacity gap: 27 of 32 responding States identified a continuing need for training, while only 5 reported having received such training. Participants called for coordinated and sustained capacity development and support in the areas of geospatial statistics, civil registration and vital statistics, national accounts, census methodology and other essential fields, including through practical training, peer-to-peer learning and institutional partnerships in geospatial data collection, management, analysis and integration into statistical production, tailored to country needs.

20. The responsible use of artificial intelligence and alternative data in the national statistical system should be guided by fit-for-purpose legislation, professional independence, sound methodologies, quality assurance processes, privacy and confidentiality controls, cybersecurity measures, transparency, interoperability, ethical safeguards, human oversight and national ownership. National statistical offices should retain the authority to coordinate, validate and integrate data produced by public institutions and non-traditional providers.

21. Participants emphasized that data created value when they were accessible, trusted and translated into information that supported policymaking and action. They called for the stronger engagement of policymakers, parliamentarians, businesses, civil society, academia and the media, together with greater investment in data literacy, statistical communication, leadership and workforce development.

22. Participants proposed that the following commitments be made as part of an action and accountability mechanism for the period 2027–2028:

(a) The Economic Commission for Africa, its members and partners should lead an initiative to establish baselines for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present communiqué by the first quarter of 2027;

(b) The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century and the Economic Commission for Africa should release and promote the observatory platform for national strategies for the development of statistics and assess its use in the next reporting cycle;

(c) The Economic Commission for Africa, regional institutions and development partners should ensure that a coordinated offer for artificial intelligence and data science capacity-development support is included in the 2027–2028 work programme of the Forum;

(d) National statistical offices should report annually on domestic statistical allocations, financing gaps and progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the present communiqué;

(e) The Economic Commission for Africa and partners should prepare an initial map of partner support, access routes and country coverage by mid-2027;

(f) The Economic Commission for Africa should issue an interim report on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present communiqué before the thirteenth meeting of the Forum.

23. The Forum invited the Statistical Commission for Africa at its tenth session:

(a) To endorse the strategic shift from recommendations to implementation through monitorable commitments, accountable leads, arrangements for adequate and predictable financing, established timelines and measurable results;

(b) To reaffirm national strategies for the development of statistics as the principal framework for country-level assistance;

(c) To call upon African Governments to predictably increase the domestic budgetary resources allocated to statistical systems and to integrate statistical development into national development planning frameworks;

(d) To request development partners to provide coordinated, predictable and multi-year support that is aligned with nationally defined priorities;

(e) To request partners to support country-level delivery arrangements that connect priorities with accountable leads, financing partners, milestones and results;

(f) To promote sustained investment in foundational statistical programmes, institutions and workforce capacity;

(g) To endorse responsible statistical modernization, including through coordinated assessments of readiness for artificial intelligence, through capacity development, through standards and through statistical public goods;

(h) To reaffirm the professional independence and coordinating authority of national statistical offices;

(i) To endorse the development by ECA and partners of an action and accountability mechanism for 2027–2028 and request that the Commission provide periodic progress reports thereon.

24. The Economic Commission for Africa was requested to submit the recommendations of the Forum to the Statistical Commission for Africa at its tenth session and, together with partner institutions, to support and report on the implementation of those recommendations through the agreed action and accountability mechanism.

25. African countries and partner institutions were urged to reflect the provisions of the present communiqué in their policies, strategies, budgets and work programmes.

26. The Economic Commission for Africa was requested to organize the thirteenth meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development, to be held in 2028, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century, the World Bank and other partner entities.

27. All stakeholders were invited to endorse the recommendations contained in the present communiqué and to contribute actively to their implementation.

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