



It gives me great pleasure to invite you all to the Third Session of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa) in Cape Town, South Africa from 17 to 23 January 2012. This is the first time that this subsidiary body of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is convening outside Addis Ababa, our headquarters. And I am glad that the first meeting away from home is taking place in South Africa, a country that has not spare any effort to support statistical development activities

on the Continent. I hope that other countries will volunteer to host this meeting in the future.

As you all know, South Africa has been instrumental in supporting the statistical rejuvenation of the continent. We had indeed planned to hold the 7th Africa Symposium on Statistical Development (ASSD) in South Africa in November 2011. However, as the country was conducting its census at that time, there was little room for organizing another big event. The 7th ASSD was therefore rescheduled for January 2012.

StatCom-Africa has now established itself as the apex organ on all issues pertaining to statistical development in Africa. It is leading the way in developing harmonized statistics across Africa in order to promote evidence-based policy making. Our ministers of finance, planning and economic development are keenly following the work of StatCom-Africa and have asked for an annual report on its activities.

The First StatCom-Africa met in 2008 under the theme “*Scaling up Statistical Development in Africa*”. Forty-two member states were represented mainly by heads of National Statistics Offices (NSOs), National Statistical Councils, and National Poverty Reduction Strategy Units. In addition, National Statistical Associations representing 10 African countries attended the meeting. The meeting was also attended by observers from non-African states, as well as international, regional, sub-regional organizations, and statistical training centers.

The Second Session took stock of progress made in various areas of statistical development identified as crucial during the first session. It addressed some of the challenges faced by stakeholders in supporting African countries in the production and use of quality statistical information in support of their development efforts. Moreover, it particularly addressed issues pertaining to the monitoring and evaluation of progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals at the 2010 review under the theme: *“Harnessing Financial and Technical Resources in Support of the Monitoring of Millennium Development Goals in African Countries.”*

Building on the successes of previous sessions, this third edition of StatCom-Africa will take place under the theme: ***Harmonizing Statistics in Support of Economic, Monetary and Social Integration in Africa***. The event will include seminars, a colloquium, and an awards ceremony recognizing those who have contributed to the development of statistics in Africa. As part of the meeting, ECA’s African Centre for Statistics (ACS), which is the Secretariat of StatCom-Africa, will organize the Fifth meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDEV) on 17 January 2012. During the FASDEV, development partners and countries are expected to share some best practices about the funding and delivery of technical assistance in support of statistical development in Africa. The Session of the Commission will also be preceded by the Seventh ASSD from 18 to 20 January 2012 on the theme ***“Africa Programme on Accelerated Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems.”***

ECA values your continued input to the development of statistics in Africa and we are confident that your contribution would be of benefit to participants. I therefore invite you to be part of this historical moment which is part of the ongoing statistical renaissance of the African continent.

I look forward to meeting you all in Cape Town!