



Economic and Social Council

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Economic Commission for Africa
Statistical Commission for Africa
Tenth session

Addis Ababa, 21–23 October 2026

Concept note

I. Introduction and rationale

1. The Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) established the Statistical Commission for Africa, an intergovernmental entity, in 2007. The Statistical Commission is a continuation of a long institutional tradition that includes the Conference of African Statisticians, established in 1959, and the Committee on Development Information, formed in 1997. It is supported by the African Centre for Statistics, which was established within ECA in 2006. Responding to its mandate established in 2007, the Statistical Commission is the main platform in Africa for the coordination of statistical development and for policy guidance.

2. Since its establishment, the Statistical Commission for Africa has served as the highest-level forum in Africa, at which the heads of African national statistical offices and other stakeholders in the field of statistics review progress, examine methodological and institutional issues and provide strategic direction for the African Statistical System. The Statistical Commission has developed major regional initiatives, strengthened coordination across the System and aligned African priorities with the global statistical agenda.

3. The tenth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa will be held under the theme “Unleashing the value of data in Africa: making official statistics a true mirror of the continent”, which reflects a central challenge facing African statistical systems today. The continent is producing more data than it ever has before, and such data can transform livelihoods if they are fully harnessed. Very often, however, data are not sufficiently harmonized for complex development challenges in the global economy, and in Africa in particular, to be overcome. The value of data lies not in their production alone, but in their transformation into accessible, trusted and actionable information that supports evidence-based decision-making, inclusive growth and sustainable development.

4. Statistics generate value only when they represent reality in a way that is relatable for all stakeholders, including, most notably, the general public. The region needs to produce official statistics that provide a clear, credible and inclusive picture of African societies, economies, territories and institutions. Such statistics should not be limited to national averages. Rather, they should reveal the disparities, vulnerabilities, inequalities and emerging opportunities on the continent. Official statistics cannot be harnessed fully if some territories, sectors or population groups are invisible or inadequately measured.



5. The theme of the tenth session is timely, because the data landscape is changing rapidly. Data and statistics are no longer generated and disseminated only by national statistical offices. Mobile phone data, citizen data, administrative data, satellite imagery, social media data and web traffic data, as well data from the Internet of things, data from automatic identification systems and data retrieved through web scraping and the use of digital payment platforms, are increasingly shaping the production and circulation of data. Such data sources are bringing innovation, speed and useful complementary sources of data, but they are also challenging the position of official statistics as the most trusted source of data among the general public. Unless traditional producers strengthen their management role and their capacity to coordinate, validate, integrate and communicate data in accordance with professional standards, their relevance risks being eroded in an increasingly crowded data environment.

6. At its tenth session, the Statistical Commission will build on the foundations laid in five documents: the African Charter on Statistics, the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa, the Yaoundé Declaration on Statistical Development in Africa, the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data and the Medellín Framework for Action on Data for Sustainable Development. The Statistical Commission is seeking to translate the commitments made in the five documents into tangible progress. It is calling for stronger statistical leadership, better coordination across institutions and stakeholders, modern legal and technological frameworks, more effective dissemination, sustained investment in capacity development, and a stronger culture of evidence-based decision-making in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union.

7. The events scheduled to be held alongside the tenth session include:

(a) Preliminary and side events, including:

(i) The twelfth meeting of the Forum on African Statistical Development;

(ii) A session on statistical leadership;

(iii) A session on modernization of statistical systems in Africa;

(iv) A session on young African statisticians;

(v) A session on “Africa beyond numbers” series;

(vi) A session on integrating emerging data sources;

(vii) An exhibition and knowledge fair;

(b) The twelfth meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Africa, under the theme “Seeing Africa clearly: advancing spatial intelligence in Africa for integrated, trusted and actionable insights”.

8. The twelfth meeting of the Regional Committee will be held in parallel with the tenth session of the Statistical Commission. The two bodies will also meet jointly on several occasions over the course of the week to strengthen the links between geospatial information and official statistics.

9. Both bodies will emphasize the need to operationalize the efforts of Africa to strengthen the integration of statistical and geospatial information frameworks, producing trusted and actionable insights for decision-making.

II. Objectives

10. The Statistical Commission for Africa is the regional equivalent of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations and the highest statistical decision-making body in Africa. It promotes standards, best practices and harmonized methods at the national, subregional and regional levels. Its sessions provide a platform to review progress in African statistical systems, strengthen linkages with global initiatives and foster dialogue between member States and development partners on priorities and capacity development.

11. At the tenth session, researchers and representatives of member States, national statistical offices, regional and subregional institutions, development partners, civil society, the private sector and other bodies that work with data will reflect on the role of data as a strategic asset. They will discuss the economic value of official statistics and identify pathways through which data can be used to drive growth, attract investment, support entrepreneurship and innovation, inform decision-making and advance economic transformation and sustainable development. They will examine the changes affecting the data sector in Africa and identify practical ways to make official statistics more relevant, inclusive, visible, trusted and used. Against this background, participants will focus on strengthening the credibility, trustworthiness and governance of official statistics and explore the opportunities and challenges of artificial intelligence to the statistical community of practice, the commercialization of data, the implications of the growing external influence on the independence of the dispensation of the statistical profession and the emergence of new data sources, such as private-sector entities and data centres.

12. The meeting will be an opportunity for member States to hold in-depth discussions on strengthening the role of statistics in reflecting the development realities faced by Governments in Africa.

13. Participants will reflect upon development in Africa, the progress made, the challenges faced and the opportunities emerging, with a special focus on improving the measurement and relevance of inequalities, vulnerabilities, context specificities, territorial disparities, informal economic activity, environmental pressures and digital transformation. They will have the opportunity to determine ways to integrate geospatial and statistical information frameworks with each other in order to obtain better spatially enabled, disaggregated, actionable insights that can be used immediately for decision-making.

III. Expected outcomes

14. During the session, the Statistical Commission is expected to:

(a) Endorse strategic directions for aligning official statistics with diverse and growing realities in Africa, in order to enhance the measurement of inequities, vulnerabilities and emerging development trends;

(b) Mobilize interest for the development of national and regional road maps to harness the value of data as a strategic economic asset;

(c) Build consensus on the need for an integrated governance framework for data and statistics in Africa – a framework that reflects emerging data sources, including geospatial resources, authorities, new data entities and the commercial sector;

(d) Identify priorities for maintaining trust and independence in statistical activities on the continent;

- (e) Agree upon directions that the region should take to integrate geospatial and statistical frameworks with each other to improve data usability, trust and policy impact.

IV. Role of the Economic Commission for Africa

15. As the secretariat of the Statistical Commission for Africa, ECA, through the African Centre for Statistics, will organize and host the session under the guidance of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission. ECA will:

- (a) Prepare the parliamentary documentation and related technical documents;
- (b) Identify presenters, facilitators and chairs for the meetings convened to be held during the session;
- (c) Facilitate the participation of regional and international partners;
- (d) Mobilize resources to cover meeting expenses, including costs related to advocacy and communication, support staff, venue charges, hospitality, printing and interpretation;
- (e) Prepare outcome documents, which will include the recommendations and the final report on the session.

V. Venue and date

16. The tenth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa will be held from 21 to 23 October 2026 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa.

17. All preliminary events will be held on 19 and 20 October 2026. Institutions and countries that are willing to organize preliminary events are requested to contact ECA through the address provided in section VIII.

VI. Languages

18. The tenth session of the Statistical Commission for Africa will be held in plenary sessions, for which simultaneous interpretation in English and French will be provided.

19. Simultaneous interpretation will not be provided for side events or for break-out sessions that may be organized for more in-depth discussions.

VII. Participants

20. Official national delegations to the Statistical Commission for Africa shall be led by the heads of national statistical offices. In addition, given the objectives of the meetings, representatives of other national statistical entities and geospatial and civil registration officials and experts will also participate.

21. Observers from intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, other national, subregional, regional and international organizations, the academic community, research institutions, the private sector and related industries are invited to attend, as are African statisticians who have played a notable role in promoting statistics in the region. Observers may attend all sessions except those designated as closed-door sessions and may participate in discussions, but they may not vote on any issues.

VIII. Contact information

22. For more information, please contact the Chief of the Coordination, Partnership and Policy Outreach Section, African Centre for Statistics, ECA, Joseph Tinfissi Ilboundo (office tel.: +251 11 544 5533; WhatsApp: +251 92 416 3430; email: ilboundo@un.org).
