

Premier Forum africain sur la formation statistique et les ressources humaines en Afrique

Bujumbura, Burundi, 18-19 juin 2009

Il a été constaté que plusieurs groupes de travail sur la formation statistique et les ressources humaines existent en Afrique. En effet, il existe actuellement les groupes suivants :

- Groupe de travail de PARIS21 sur la formation statistique en Afrique ;
- Groupe de travail du STATCOM sur la Formation statistique et le renforcement des capacités ;
- Commission Formation au sein du Comité de Coordination Statistique pour l'Afrique ;
- Ainsi qu'un nouveau groupe qui devait se former pour accompagner le projet de l'ACBF.

Cette multiplication des groupes a entraîné un double emploi et une utilisation inefficace des ressources dédiées au renforcement des activités et initiatives de formation statistique en Afrique.

Dans ce contexte, une réunion sur la formation statistique s'est tenue en marge de la 19^{ème} réunion du comité de direction d'AFRISTAT le 13 avril 2009 à Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Au cours de cette rencontre, il a été suggéré de remplacer tous les groupes de travail existants par un groupe unique, placé sous l'autorité du STATCOM. C'est pour cette raison que s'est tenu à Bujumbura, Burundi, du 18 au 19 juin 2009, un Forum africain sur la formation statistique et les ressources humaines en Afrique. Ce forum a regroupé 58 représentants des centres de formation statistiques africains (CFS), des départements de statistiques des universités africaines, des instituts nationaux de statistique (INS), des organismes sous régionaux, régionaux et internationaux qui ont un intérêt particulier pour le développement de la formation statistique et des ressources humaines en Afrique.

Ce Forum a été conjointement organisé par le Centre africain pour la statistique (CAS), la Banque africaine de développement (BAD), et le Partenariat en statistique pour le développement au 21^{ème} siècle (PARIS21) et la Coopération française en étroite collaboration avec l'Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques du Burundi (ISTEEBU).

L'objectif principal du Forum était d'établir fermement un mécanisme unique et permanent d'échange d'information et de meilleures pratiques en matière de développement de la formation statistique et de ressources

humaines nécessaires dans les systèmes statistiques nationaux (SSN) des pays africains en vue de la production et l'utilisation d'information statistique de qualité en appui à leurs efforts de développement. Les objectifs spécifiques incluaient :

- l'examen des initiatives et des activités existantes relatives au développement de la formation statistique et des ressources humaines ;
- l'échange d'information et de meilleures pratiques sur le développement de la formation statistique et des ressources humaines ;
- la prise en compte des défis auxquels les CFS et les INS africains font face afin d'appuyer les pays dans leurs efforts de produire l'information statistique de qualité ;
- la proposition des mesures pour faire face aux défis identifiés de façon coordonnée au niveau régional ;
- la mise en œuvre d'un mécanisme permanent pour l'échange d'information sur la formation statistique et les ressources humaines en Afrique ;
- revue des termes de référence provisoires du Groupe africain sur la formation statistique et les ressources humaines (GRAFOS).

Au terme de la réunion, les participants ont pris les recommandations suivantes :

- Ils ont formellement entériné la création du GRAFOS comme groupe de travail unique en formation statistique pour l'Afrique formé des différentes parties prenantes. Celui-ci reportera tous les deux ans auprès de STATCOM-Africa.
- Ce Groupe remplacera tous les groupes existants à ce jour sur la formation statistique en Afrique. Il disposera d'un Secrétariat permanent basé au Centre africain pour la statistique (CAS) et rapportant au Groupe.
- En attendant la mise en place d'un Secrétariat permanent, les participants ont sollicité la CEA, PARIS21, deux représentants des CFS et deux représentants des INS afin d'assurer le Secrétariat provisoire du Groupe.

First Forum on Statistical Training and Human Resources in Africa

Bujumbura, Burundi, June 18-19, 2009

Training and human resources development have been identified as one of the main challenges facing the development of statistics in African National Statistical Systems (NSSs). In response to this particular challenge, stakeholders have set up a number of initiatives and engaged in various activities aimed at enhancing the capacity of African countries in this regard including the following:

- The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century (PARIS21) Working Group on Statistical Training in Africa;
- The Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa) Working Group on Statistical Training;
- The African Statistical Coordination Committee (ASCC) Working Group on Statistical Training; and
- The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) Group (to be set up) to accompany this organization's specific project on statistical training.

There is consensus among stakeholders that the multiplicity of groups and initiatives is more likely to lead to an inefficient use of scarce resources and duplication of efforts in the pursuit of the reinforcement of capacities of African NSSs in this area.

Against this background, a meeting on the coordination of statistical training activities and initiatives took place in the margins of the 19th meeting of the AFRISTAT Steering Committee on April 13, 2009 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. During that meeting, it was suggested that existing groups on statistical training in Africa be replaced by a single group under the aegis of STATCOM-Africa. It is in this context that a Forum on Statistical Training and Human Resources was organized in Bujumbura, Burundi, from June 18-19, 2009. The meeting brought together 58 representatives from African Statistical Training Centers (STCs), Statistics Departments of selected universities, National Statistical Offices (NSOs), and subregional, regional, and international organizations with a special interest in statistical training and human resources development in Africa.

The Forum was jointly organized by the African Center for Statistics (ACS), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21), and the French Cooperation, in close collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies of Burundi (ISTEEBU).

The main objective of the Forum was to firmly establish a unique and permanent mechanism for the exchange of information and best practices in statistical training and human resources development. The main objective of this mechanism is to support African national statistical systems in the production and use of quality statistical information in support of their development efforts. Specific objectives were to:

- Take stock of existing initiatives and activities related to statistical training and human resources development;
- Exchange information and best practices on statistical training and human resources development;
- Identify challenges facing African STCs and NSOs in supporting countries' efforts to produce quality statistical information;
- Propose measures to address the identified challenges on a regional coordinated basis;
- Set up a permanent mechanism (AGROST¹ – African Group on Statistical Training and Human Resources) for the exchange of information on statistical training and human resources in Africa; and
- Review the Terms of Reference of the AGROST.

Participants at the meeting adopted the following recommendations:

- They endorsed the inception of AGROST as a unique working group dealing with statistical training in Africa comprising various stakeholders, as defined in its Terms of Reference (ToRs). The AGROST will report every two years to the Statistical Commission for Africa (STATCOM-Africa).
- The AGROST replaces all existing groups on statistical training in Africa. It will be supported by a permanent Secretariat based at the African Center for Statistics (ACS), which will report to the Group.
- While awaiting the setting up of the permanent Secretariat, participants called upon the ECA, PARIS21, representatives of Statistical Training Centers (STCs) (ENSEA Abidjan and University of Botswana), and representatives of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) (Burkina Faso and Uganda) to fulfill the role of the temporary Secretariat to the AGROST.

1 AGROST is known in French as GRAFOS (Groupe africain sur la formation statistique et les ressources humaines).

Regional Workshop on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, June 29–July 3, 2009

A Regional Workshop on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa, was held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania from June 29 to July 3, 2009. The workshop was organized jointly by the UNECA–African Center for Statistics (ACS), UN Statistics Division (UNSD), African Development Bank (AfDB) and InWent of Germany and jointly hosted by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Registration, Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency (RITA) of the United Republic of Tanzania. The workshop was initiated by the ACS and the UNSD to address what has been called a “*Scandal of Invisibility*” because “many people in Africa and Asia are born and die without leaving a trace in any legal record or official statistics. Absence of reliable data for births, deaths and causes of death are at the root of this scandal of invisibility, which renders most of the world’s poor as unseen, unaccountable and hence uncounted.” This scandal has serious implications for vital statistics, human and constitutional rights, property rights, policy and national development as well as MDG monitoring.

The regional workshop was attended by 140 participants drawn from national civil registration offices and National Statistics Offices (NSOs) of 40 countries and 5 regional training institutions, the UN Statistics Division, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, HMN/WHO and other development partners resident in Tanzania. Among the participants were a number of Heads of NSOs and the Minister of Justice of Ethiopia.

The workshop noted that a fully functioning civil registration system is the source of legal identity and related information for the individual, the community and the government in claiming and safeguarding rights and privileges enshrined in national laws and international conventions and covenants. Civil registration is an instrument in facilitating health, education and other social services to individuals, families and communities. Civil registration is also the conventional and most appropriate source of vital statistics. Vital statistics are a crucial and irreplaceable component of national statistical systems as they generate a numerical profile of the most precious resource of any country – its human capital. Managing human capital appropriately, in turn, is an indisputable and most visible indicator of good governance or the lack of it.

The workshop noted, with utmost concern, the fact that in the majority of countries in Africa, and in almost all the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the civil registration system operates on a sporadic and incomplete basis. In those countries, there are no adequate systems that enable citizens to be

recognized by the state and hence the justice system and public administration services could not be improved in a manner that promotes development and security of citizens. Because of low coverage of civil registration systems in most African countries, some important vital indicators such as life expectancy at birth, infant and child mortality rates could not be measured from vital statistics. Household surveys and censuses have been undertaken to fill the information gaps created by lack of effective vital registration systems. These are largely ad hoc exercises and interim measures that should not be taken as long-term solutions for generating vital statistics.

Of the many components of both civil registration and vital statistics systems, only a handful of African countries can confidently claim to have well functioning systems. Whether it is the lack of adequate legal framework, low coverage of civil registration due to a number of circumstances, the non-existence of cooperation and coordination between civil registration and official statistics, low statistical capacity, or simply lack of awareness of the need to develop both in a simultaneous manner, the outcome is disappointingly the absence of coherent, functioning and regular generation of accurate, reliable and timely vital statistics from the civil registration system.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop adopted the following recommendations:

Advocacy

- To dedicate the theme for the 2010 African Statistics Day to civil registration and vital statistics systems.
- All African governments are called upon to take appropriate measures in availing the necessary resources and support to civil registration and vital statistics systems.
- Explore the possibility of organizing a high-level Ministerial Conference on Improving Civil Registration as soon as possible to maintain the momentum.

Operational

- Civil Registration Offices and National Statistics Offices, development partners and regional training institutions are urged to actively participate in the regional Network on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems in Africa.

- Countries are encouraged to take full advantage of the sectoral reform programs, democratization and decentralization processes currently ongoing in Africa to bring civil registration services to their populations.
- All governments are strongly encouraged to revisit the topic of fees for issuing documents based on civil registration records – the Workshop reiterated that the United Nations recommends that the registration is always free of charge and that the fee for documents should be as low as possible.
- The African Development Bank, being a regional development bank, is requested to continue its support for African countries and devise a special program that promotes speedy improvements for civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa.
- Regional training institutions are urged to take the initiative in developing appropriate curricula for improving civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa and to actively participate in evaluation studies and research undertakings and also in strengthening the aforementioned network.
- Countries need to proactively interact with each other to share knowledge, experience and resources using various mechanisms, such as, study tours, workshops, technical support, etc.
- Organize biennially the regional workshop on civil registration and vital statistics systems.
- The African Center for Statistics should continue serving as a regional platform for civil registration and vital statistics systems and in leveraging resources, technical support and coordination among countries in Africa.
- The UN Statistics Division to continue its support and, in close collaboration with regional institutions in Africa and other partners, to devise a special program for Africa in general and fragile states in particular.
- The African Center for Statistics and the African Development Bank in collaboration with other development partners should develop a medium-term program for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa.
- Countries to finalize their country action plans (drafted at the Workshop) and submit them to African Center for Statistics.

Technical

- Countries are advised and encouraged to revisit and update their civil registration laws and statistical legislations in line with current developments and take measures that ensure their proper implementation.

- Countries need to identify the underlying reasons for the low level of civil registration in the rural areas and design strategies to overcome this low coverage, including the introduction of mobile registration units in nomadic and remote areas.
- It is vital to ensure that both civil registrars and statisticians are fully cross-trained in basic concepts, definitions and procedures in both areas.
- Civil registration offices and NSOs are urged to collaborate and interface, and the NSOs are urged to play an active role in setting national standards and methods for civil registration and vital statistics systems.
- Countries are encouraged to use conventional methods in evaluating their civil registration and vital statistics systems and to take measures in ensuring proper utilization and documentation of their data and information.
- Countries are encouraged to use UN guidelines and recommendations as a basis for their civil registration and vital statistics improvement program.

Partnership

- The African Center for Statistics and the UN Statistics Division need to strengthen institutional linkages in facilitating integration, harmonization, and coordination of efforts currently being undertaken by various organizations at country and regional levels in order to promote cost-effective mechanisms and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Donors, UN agencies, consortiums, education and training centers, NGOs and other development partners are urged to support Africa in the area of capacity building, e.g. through the provision of training, public education, IT development, data capturing, coding, processing and analysis and provision of other capacity building materials and financial support.
- Countries are urged to mainstream civil registration and vital statistics systems in their national statistical development programs.

FOLLOW-UP

A compendium of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa will be prepared as part of the post-workshop activities. The compendium will comprise the status of country civil registration and vital statistics systems together with an action plan for the improvement of the systems. It will be used in the preparation of the medium-term regional program for the improvement of civil registration and vital statistics systems in Africa.

The 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute

Durban, South Africa, August 16-22, 2009

The 57th session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI) was held in Durban, South Africa, from August 16-22, 2009. This was the first time in the ISI's 124-year history that such a conference had taken place in Sub-Saharan Africa. The 57th session, as with other past sessions, brought together more than 4,000 participants, including academicians, professional statisticians, econometricians, and other statistics practitioners from about 130 countries. The African Development Bank (AfDB) was one of the three major sponsors of the 2009 ISI Conference, together with Statistics South Africa and the KwaZulu Natal Government.

The ISI is one of the oldest scientific organizations in the world. The biennial ISI conference is the biggest gathering in the area of statistics. It provides a forum for exchanging ideas, developing new professional links, and discussing current trends and developments in the field of statistics. It also provides an opportunity for the training of statisticians, especially from developing countries, on the latest developments in statistical methods and their applications.

In his opening remarks, the President of the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Jacob Zuma, warned of challenges facing statistics. He urged leaders to beef up the resources allocated to the international financial institutions to help them deal adequately with the global financial crisis. He warned about the grave danger posed by the global financial meltdown and challenged statisticians to help find solutions to the crisis: "The world economic meltdown,



which began in developed economies, also dictates that statisticians search for solutions which will benefit all nations,” said President Zuma in his concluding remarks. (A transcript of President Zuma’s full speech can be found on p. 485.)

In his ministerial address (see p. 493 for full transcript), the South African Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Trevor Manuel, called on delegates to maximize the output of this “rare, highly representative and exceedingly important conference.” He called on statisticians to have a dose of humility and accept that “we measure (or sometimes deploy others to measure on our behalf) because we don’t know the answer or we don’t know nearly enough.” To stress the importance of statistics for development policy management, he recounted the famous slogan that says, “In God we trust, all others must produce statistical support.”

The African Statistical Coordination Committee (ASCC), comprising the AfDB, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the African Union Commission (AUC), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) worked hard to make ISI 2009 truly an African event. Several African organizations, scholars, and statisticians were able to participate and present research papers. The discussions largely dealt with the challenges of statistical development in Africa.

The ASCC is also working to ensure a lasting legacy not only for South Africa as the host country but also for the entire African continent. A major part of this strategy is the *Isibalo* “Statistical Capacity Building Program.”





The program is designed to facilitate the participation of Africa's statistical community in debates over key issues on measurement, monitoring, and evaluation; encourage the improvement of statistical methodologies and foster innovations. It includes issues such as: statistical research and capacity development; training and support for young statisticians; mathematics, statistics and the girl-child; the statistical education program; and African women in statistics.

Isibalo also aims at developing cadres of statisticians and demographers in Africa; developing statistics education in Africa; and promoting statistical data utilization in Africa for evidence-based policy-making while creating a platform for sharing best practices.

It is therefore vital that African countries continue cultivating a culture of evidence-based policy making and fostering partnerships for improved availability and use of statistics. Future challenges include developing strategic leadership and management of statistical offices in African countries and increasing advocacy for sustainable funding from governments.

The AfDB organized six workshops and three high-level meetings. The principal objective of the AfDB's workshops was to impart the necessary knowledge to African participants to facilitate enhanced use of harmonized approaches and standard statistical methods and practices in RMCs that would ultimately result in improved data quality. The workshops comprised the following:

- ***The ISI Satellite Workshop on the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics:*** Jointly organized in Maputo, Mozambique, by the AfDB and FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank and the European Commission, to review and finalize the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The meeting sought inputs from over 200 participants from all over the world, representing international organizations and national agencies responsible for producing and analyzing agricultural and rural statistics.
- ***The International Comparison Program for Africa (ICP-Africa) Data Quality and Validation Workshop:*** Organized by the AfDB to provide participants with tools and guidelines for improving the quality of ICP-Africa price data by reducing errors due to units of measurements, quantities, quality differences and other observational errors. This will ensure data reliability and comparability within and across countries.
- ***Labor Statistics – New Developments in the Measurement of Economic Characteristics through Population Censuses:*** Jointly organized by AfDB and ILO to train participants from African countries and enhance their capacity in the collection and use of data on economic characteristics in population censuses. This experience has set the ground for very fruitful collaboration between AfDB and ILO on activities aimed at improving labor statistics in Africa.





- ***Workshop on Implementing the New 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA-2008) in Africa: Conceptual and practical challenges and issues related to ICP requirements:*** Organized by the AfDB to discuss the implementation of the new SNA-2008 in Africa and the validation of GDP data broken down into detailed Basic Headings (BHs) for 2007 and 2008. African country participants (i) reviewed the methodology for breaking down GDP and used case studies to illustrate practical situations, (ii) carried out practical validation exercises on actual countries' GDP data for 2007 and 2008. Participants provided valuable inputs and also generated a regional matrix of national vectors of GDP expenditures broken down into basic headings for the years 2007 and 2008.
- ***Workshop on Consumer Price Index (CPI) Compilation:*** Organized by the AfDB to train African price statisticians on CPI compilation methods based on the recommendations in the new International Supplementary Handbook on Consumer Price Indices.
- ***Workshop on Harmonization of CPI (HCPI) in SADC and COMESA Countries:*** Organized by AfDB, COMESA and SADC to discuss and agree on the framework, product coverage and appropriate methodology for compiling a Harmonized Consumer Price Index (HCPI).

The three high-level meetings included: (i) The African Group on National Accounts; (ii) African countries' Heads of National Statistics Offices (NSOs); and (iii) SADC Heads of National Statistics Offices.

- ***The 3rd Meeting of the African Group on National Accounts (AGNA)***: Organized by the AfDB in collaboration with the AUC and the ECA to review and amend the draft African Strategy on the Implementation of the new System of National Accounts (SNA-2008).
- ***Meeting of Heads of National Statistics Offices from all African countries***: organized by the AfDB to discuss progress in the implementation of the Bank's Phase II Statistical Capacity Building (SCB) program and other outstanding matters. The meeting provided a forum for exchanging ideas, experiences and best practices for better and harmonized implementation of the SCB program.
- ***Meeting of Heads of National Statistics Offices from SADC member countries***: Organized by the AfDB at the request of SADC member countries. The objective of the meeting was to review the progress toward establishing a regional statistical training institute in the region, whose goal is to coordinate and provide statistical training to staff of NSOs (and others) with a view to building the capacity of a critical mass of statisticians in SADC countries.



Address by H.E. Jacob Zuma, the President of the Republic of South Africa, at the 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute (ISI)

Durban, August 16, 2009



**Hon Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Zweli Mkhize;
Hon Minister of the National Planning Commission,
Mr Trevor Manuel;
The Mayor of eThekweni Mr Obed Mlaba;
Statistician-General Pali Lehohla;
The President of the ISI Denise Lievesley;
Chairperson of Statistics Council, Mr Howard Gabriels;
President of South African Statistics Association,
(SASA) Dr Khangelani Zuma,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am honoured to interact with members of one of the oldest scientific organisations in the world.

We appreciate the fact that you have come to our shores.

Ladies and gentlemen, the country is mourning the passing on of Professor Thamsanqa Khambule, an outstanding mathematician and accomplished steward of Stats SA.

We extend our condolences to his family and to Stats SA and entire fraternity.

His contribution to the development of mathematics as a discipline in disadvantaged communities will be eternally appreciated.

Let me reiterate that we are truly pleased to host more than 2,500 elected members from more than 130 countries.

We do not take for granted the fact that in 2003 you decided to bring your biennial sitting to sub-Saharan Africa for the first time in the institute's 124-year history.

This indicates your commitment to African and world statistical progress and to supporting much-needed development in the world.

It is wonderful to see that this commitment is finding expression in that, for the first time, one-quarter of all delegates are from Africa.

The discussion around Africa's developmental agenda must provide a new direction in debates regarding statistical capacity-building on the African continent.

Esteemed delegates,

You are assembled here because you seek solutions to the challenges that affect the world today.

These include the global economic crisis, food insecurity, poverty, climate change and many others.

The solutions can be found through cooperation, global dialogue and, importantly, coordinated action, which is what this conference is about.

There are issues that affect people's daily lives that need to be measured.

These issues include broad demographic patterns, features of urbanisation and the implications for water, sanitation, energy, transport and so on.

The world economic meltdown, which began in developed economies, also dictates that statisticians search for solutions which will benefit all nations.

The economic crisis poses serious dangers to the development of low income countries, particularly in Africa.

Demand for African exports has dropped, investment flows have declined, the cost of borrowing has increased, and remittances from Africans abroad are expected to decrease.

Unless decisive action is taken, the crisis may set back recent economic and social progress on the continent, including progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Several African countries, including South Africa, have undertaken measures to minimise the impact of the crisis.

These include fiscal stimulus packages, revising expenditure, targeting assistance to key sectors, and strengthening financial regulation.

South Africa supports a global response to the crisis to restore stability. A sustainable, longer term response needs to be pursued through the United Nations, IMF, World Bank and other multilateral institutions.

In our view, the capacity of the multilateral financial institutions to respond to the crisis has been inadequate.

We have therefore called for a significant increase in resources for these institutions, and an increase in the representation of developing countries.

The increase in resources will enable these institutions to provide better forecasting, planning, monitoring and evaluation.

This will no doubt include efficient statistical data gathering and analysis to assist recovery, especially in the developing world.

Through professionals such as yourselves, we can ensure that the world never again finds itself with problems it should have foreseen.

The need for macro-economic and social information is more important than ever before.

These include details of economic growth, price stability, demographics, population dynamics, poverty employment and job creation.

Esteemed delegates,

The importance of statistics for development is a continental priority.

During the 12th Summit of African Heads of State and Government, member states were called upon to sign and ratify the African Charter of Statistics.

The Charter provides a regulatory framework for statistical development on the African continent.

Developing countries rely on statisticians to provide trends and information that will guide planning for socio-economic development.

The African Charter emphasises evidence-based decision making to guide the African Union in accelerating integration and to implement development programmes that combat poverty.

The AU notes that to meet the continental development challenges, member states require a robust statistical data system which provides reliable, comprehensive and harmonized statistical information on the continent.

At a regional level, the Southern African Development community (SADC) statistics programme aims to ensure the harmonization of statistics among



member states as well as the coordination of regional statistics on many matters.

These include foreign trade, population, commodity prices, gender, agriculture, education, employment and development programmes.

The SADC Human Development Indicators show that the region is characterised by medium human development levels and falling levels of human progress, with poverty constraining the quality of life.

Reliable information is therefore needed to enable us to implement strategies towards achieving the ideals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Millennium Development Goals.

These include investing in African human capital, which embrace capacity building and reversing the so-called "Brain Drain".

The overarching Millennium Development Goal, as most of us know, is halving poverty by 2015 and we need accurate facts.

We all know that your field is fraught with controversy and intellectual wars. Everyone has their own view of what the figures should show on any topic be it education, crime or health.

South Africans will tell you about ongoing quarrels over crime statistics, infant or mother morality rates and other contentious issues.

Governments and politicians rely heavily on official statistics to make informed decisions. On the other hand, opposition parties and various pressure groups and non-governmental organisations normally use the statistics to attack governments.

This makes the work of statisticians very difficult as their output will always be questioned.

A solution should be possible. Improved communication and cooperation between the various role-players will help to build confidence in both statistics and policy-making.

In our view, there is nothing that stops statisticians in academia and other areas from working with government statisticians to advance methods of collection, compilation and interpretation of statistics.

This would be done for the good of the country concerned.

In this way, official statistics would not be questioned by pressure groups in a manner that challenges their credibility and hampers their use.

Another point to ponder is the fact that information in the world is moving at a very fast pace.

Questions continue to be asked about whether statisticians can measure up to the pace at which demand for information manifests itself.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You are meeting during Women's Month in our country.

Last week we commemorated an important milestone in our history. On the 9th of August 1956, about 20,000 women marched to the seat of government, the Union Buildings in Tshwane, Pretoria.

They marched in protest against the then hated system of pass laws.

As a country we continued to work tirelessly to improve the status of women in our society.

This conference reminds us of an area we must still work on much more vociferously, that of promoting mathematics and statistics among girl children in schools from a very early age.

It is important therefore to make the subject attractive to the youth.

The manner in which you, as statisticians, illuminate and communicate the complex subject of statistics should be simplified.

This would help us all to interest young people in studying this subject and related ones such as mathematics, geography, economics, science and technology. We therefore urge you not to frighten children!

We are pleased that ISI 2009 will serve as a springboard for leaving a lasting legacy of statistical development on the African continent.

It is thus significant that more than 300 promising young delegates from the statistical community in developing countries have been funded to attend ISI 2009.

We also commend your contribution through the work of the international Association for Statistics Education in organising the Isibalo International Statistical Literacy Competition.

This will help to promote and increase the interest of the youth in statistics education.

We are already encouraged by the fact that more than 7,000 South African pupils from 126 schools, comprising of primary and secondary schools, sat for the first phase of the ISLP competition in July 2008.

It was equally significant to see more than 2,000 young people from 17 high schools from six counties, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Swaziland, in the SADC region participate in this competition.

Such developments will boost the new interest in statistical development by African countries.

You have quite an intensive programme ahead of you. You will generate mountains of information, as 1600 papers will be presented on more than 300 themes.

Your areas of focus are very crucial at this time in the world – from Statistics in Finance; to Statistical issues relating to climate change; Biostatistics in Health; Sport Statistics and Statistics in Africa.

It is not surprising that you will be running 60 different sessions a day, in order to cover all these very important issues.

We are confident that this conference will respond positively to the needs of the peoples of the world.

It will make a significant contribution to the fight against poverty and hunger, and the ongoing struggle for peace, stability and development.

At this juncture, I should perhaps take the liberty to remind you that this city is one of the proud hosts of the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament.

Your host province, KwaZulu-Natal, is the first in South Africa to launch a provincial 2010 FIFA soccer tournament website, which will be most useful to you for information on provincial attractions.

We look forward to welcoming you back in the country next year to enjoy one of the best soccer World Cup tournaments the world has ever seen.

Esteemed delegates,

It is my pleasure and honour to declare the 57th Session of the ISI open.

Let me also take this opportunity to wish Ireland well as it takes over the baton as host for 58th Session to be held in Dublin.

I wish you succesful deliberations.

I thank you.

Ministerial Address to the Opening Ceremony 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute

by Trevor Manuel, MP, Hon. Minister of the National Planning Commission

Durban, August 16, 2009

Programme Director

His Excellency, The President of the Republic of SA, Mr Zuma

The Premier of KwaZulu Natal, Dr Mkhize

Statistician General of South Africa, Mr Lehohla

President of the ISI, Prof Denise Lievesley

His Worship, The Executive Mayor of eThekweni, Councillor Mlaba

ISI Executive Board Members

Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Heads of International Statistics Offices

ISI Members from 135 countries

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed

Welcome to this 57th Session of the International Statistical Institute. Our invocation to all delegates is to maximise the output of this rare, highly representative and exceedingly important conference. In order to successfully measure, yes even that output, by next Saturday, all of us, yes even you statisticians need a dose of humility. Let us all accept that we measure (or sometimes deploy you to measure on our behalf) because we don't know the answers or we don't know nearly enough.

I once saw a slogan that read, "In God we trust, all others must produce statistical support." We should all share in the view that we can never measure for its own sake. As you gather here in Durban, every session, even those that have exceedingly high-falutin titles, are focused on measuring the human condition, or the impact of decisions on people. So, the principles and standards that you will use need to be both agreed upon and further developed. There is also the thorny issue of the ability to maintain your impartiality in the face of people like me. As Winston Churchill once remarked to a statistician in the Home Office, "I gather young man, that you wish to be a Member of Parliament. The first lesson that you must learn is, when I call for statistics about the rate of infant mortality, what I want is proof that fewer babies died when I was Prime Minister than when anyone else was Prime Minister." So, reluctantly we will concede that your impartiality is important.

What is also important is that you all appreciate that improving on the human condition means that the sharing that takes place between yourselves here must contribute significantly to the objective that will see end-to-end coverage of the human condition in every part of the world. A profound difficulty that policymakers across the world share is that those parts of the world most in need of development are also sorely in need of an adequate number of statisticians to measure progress. The reality of global inequality is confirmed by the 2009 Progress Report on the Millennium Development Goals which was released by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon about 5 weeks ago. When Heads of State and Government convened in New York at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, he made a commitment on their own behalf and on behalf of all of their peoples that the measurable ravages of poverty and inequality will be lifted by 2015. Sixty percent of that time has already elapsed and some of the world's poorest regions—our own in Sub-Saharan Africa and that of Southern Asia—may actually find themselves, in some respects, in a worse position than they were in 2000. Part of the difficulty is that neither the United Nations nor we can confirm with any degree of certainty—the report carries the health warning, “Depending on the indicator, the latest information could date back as early as 2005, or as late as 2009.” What is imperative, though, is the understanding that world leaders took those decisions freely, about the condition of people across the world, regardless of nationality, because they considered that the human condition was a blight on all of this generation and a failure to attain the MDGs would be a collective failure of all of us. But in order to know, we must be able to measure the human condition. And that is where you enter the equation.

It is also worth reminding ourselves that the human condition is such that people who are poor do not allow their condition of poverty to confine them, nor will they allow their desire for improvement to be contained. So, people will travel long distances, cross deserts, swim across crocodile-infested rivers, scale fences or cross oceans in rickety tubs in order to escape poverty. So, policymakers must know, and be encouraged to act correctly. Development is not quite a zero-sum game, it has been and will remain a shared responsibility.

In the face of the recent setbacks in the global economy, this shared responsibility becomes even more important. The collapse of commodity prices, the rapid increases in the prices of basic foodstuffs, and the ravages of climate change all converge to produce this setback. We must know in order to improve and to raise the collective responsibility for driving the changes.

Here in South Africa, this is the task that the new government has committed itself to. The CEO of South Africa Inc has made that commitment repeatedly. He has ordered his Ministers, Premiers and Mayors to spare none of themselves in that joint endeavour to improve on the quality of life of all of South Africa's people. It is early in his tenure—he has served 5.422% of his 5-year term of office.

He has put in place new approaches to the measurement of performance and accountability. He is the Chief Executive of Measurement of the human condition in the Republic of South Africa—and so, he is one of you. It is my pleasure to request our CEO, His Excellency Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, to address you now. Mr President.

Thank you.