Opening Remarks

by

Dr. Dimitri Sanga
Director of the African Centre for Statistics

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Representatives of African member States;  
Representatives of sub regional, regional, and international organizations;  
Dear colleagues;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is an honour and privilege for me to welcome you all to the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and to this Experts Meeting on Climate Change Measurement as well as the Seventh African Development Forum.

Allow me to seize this opportunity to acknowledge and thank InWent of Germany for their significant contribution to the organization of this meeting.

I salute this and look forward to our collaboration on this event and other endeavors.

Distinguished Guests;  
Dear colleagues;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;

As you are aware, the seventh ADF is on “Acting on Climate Change for Sustainable Development in Africa”.

The presence of a variety of stakeholders including technicians, researchers, policymakers, and the civil society this week at ECA is a testimony of the fact that Africans place climate change high on the political agenda of the continent.

Climate change is not only an environmental issue. It is a sustainable development issue as its effects might constitute, among others, an economic threat and potentially contribute to the destabilization of societies in the worst affected areas.
As statisticians, you are certainly aware that to understand climate change issues and the impact climate change will have on Africa, we need to bring together climate data, official statistics on environment, economy and society, along with geographic information into a coherent and integrated framework.

While this seems to be a tall order, bringing together diverse sources of information is something we, statisticians and data professionals, do all the time.

Dear colleagues;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

In our quest to properly inform policy decision making with respect to climate change issues, we are not starting from scratch.

In fact, in the field of official statistics, there has been significant progress integrating environmental and economic data into a single framework called the System of Environmental Economic Accounts, which is being revised and is expected to be elevated to the status of an international statistical standard by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2012.

The African Centre for Statistics (ACS) in partnership with the African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) is engaged in this process along with the revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, which promises bring the ecosystems approach into environment statistics.

Moreover, building on ongoing rapid developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Geographic Information Systems (GIS) provide a powerful platform for integrating diverse sources of information, allowing the latter to be mapped, analyzed, and accessible in a user-friendly manner.

To this end, the ACS in support of the ACPC and the ECA as a whole, recently established a GIS lab and has begun integrating statistics from the ACS database with geographic information.
Dear colleagues;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

As far as accessibility is concerned, the ACS is building a repository of data for the ACPC in the form of a platform of data and geographic information to support climate policy, risk management, adaptation and mitigation analyses.

These data and geographic information will be publicly available so that researchers, governments, communities and concerned citizens can investigate what we can do to adapt to climate change and sustain Africa’s development. As such we have a vested interest in improving climate and related information.

As an international organization, ECA is a compiler of information collected by countries and other sub-regional organizations. It is therefore important that the ACS build the capacity of African countries and organizations in collecting, processing, analyzing and disseminating and archiving data on climate change.

However, strengthening capacity alone will not ensure coherent information across African countries and organizations. A coordinated approach to climate data and related information is required between institutions and organizations producing and using these data. Roles need to be clarified between institutions, classifications and standards applied, and duplication avoided.

To this end, the coordination of climate data and related information should be part and parcel of the National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS) being developed and implemented across Africa.

Of course climate data and many geographic information sets have not always been considered as part of National Statistical Offices (NSOs) work. It is therefore necessary for NSOs to reach out and plan with National Hydrological and Meteorological Services, environmental agencies and other data producers, and develop plans for coordinating information related to climate change. The ACS will play an important role in this regard in building National Statistical Systems (NSSs) in line with NSDSs principles.
Dear colleagues;
Ladies and Gentlemen;

This meeting, and indeed this forum, is a place to bring together your experiences in addressing climate change information needs, and coordinating institutional arrangements, so that we can make recommendations for governments across Africa to follow up on.

Your presence here in this meeting, and later in the wider Forum, will directly contribute to a larger process of coordinated actions across Africa to address climate change and related issues.

The ACS looks forward to the free exchange of ideas, and I personally look forward to reading the outcomes of this meeting and seeing your contribution to the Forum.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.