

Background

During the 25th Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the 16th Meeting of the African Ministers responsible for Economic Planning and Development in May 1990, November 18 was adopted as the **African Statistics Day**. It is celebrated each year in order to raise public awareness of the importance of statistics in all aspects of socioeconomic life in the continent.

Celebration of the African Statistics Day in Mauritius

The theme chosen for this year's ASD was: *“Modernizing data ecosystems to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA): the role of official statistics and big data in the economic transformation and sustainable development of Africa”*.

Statistics Mauritius (SM) celebrated the 2023 African Statistics Day by holding a half-day workshop on 20 November 2023 from 9.30 hrs to 13.30 hrs at Ravenala Attitude Hotel, Balaclava.

(i) Welcome Address by Mr M. Dawoonauth, Ag. Director of Statistics

The Ag. Director welcomed everyone and mentioned that the AfCFTA agreement aims to create the largest free trade area in the world measured by the number of countries participating connecting 1.3 billion people across the 55 member countries of Africa with a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) valued at US\$ 3.4 Trillion. It has the potential to lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty, but achieving its full potential will depend on putting in place significant policy reforms and trade facilitation measures.

(ii) Speech by Mr. J.E Charles Cartier, Chairperson of Statistics Board

The Chairperson emphasized on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which is a flagship project of Agenda 2063 aimed at creating a single African market for goods and services facilitated by free movement of persons, capital, investment to deepen economic integration, promote and attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality, industrialisation, agricultural development, food security and structural transformation. He reflected on modernising data ecosystems in the continent for production and utilisation of high-quality official statistics and seize the opportunities of big data. The high volume, high velocity and wide variety of data like Global Positioning System (GPS) devices, automated teller machines, scanning devices, sensors, mobile phones, satellites and social media, which are commonly referred to as big data, and are potentially useful for official statistics, require new tools and methods for capturing, managing and processing them efficiently.

(iii) Opening ceremony by Dr the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

The workshop was officially opened by Dr the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. He stated that high-quality statistics are needed for Africa's regional integration and economic transformation, and in achieving the aims set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and by the African Union in Agenda 2063. He also pointed out that we are aiming at a robust, inclusive and durable growth and highlighted the advantage of AfCFTA agreement which aims to provide broader and deeper economic integration across the continent as well as attract investment, boost trade, provide better jobs, reduce poverty and increase shared prosperity in Africa.

(iv) The workshop included some presentations with the following salient features:

- *Implementation of AfCFTA Agreement and availability of statistics on trade issues and investment*

The AfCFTA is the world's largest free trade area bringing together the 54 countries of the African Union (AU) and eight (8) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) to create a single market for the continent. An

Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)- Signed at the 10th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government in March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. It was officially launched at the 12th Extraordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Niamey, Niger in July 2019.

Some objectives of the AfCFTA are to:

- ❖ create a single continental market for goods and services, including free movement of business persons and investments
 - ❖ build on the initiatives and development in the State Parties and RECs
 - ❖ expand intra-Africa trade
 - ❖ attain sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender equality and structural transformation
 - ❖ resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships
- *Mauritius-Africa Strategy-Spearheading Africa's Economic Transformation*

The Africa Strategy consolidates and enhances the position of Mauritius as a Business Hub and Learning Platform for the Continent.

Importance of the Multi-Prong Africa Strategy are:

- ❖ Trade and Investment Promotion
- ❖ Market Intelligence, Desk Research & Project Identification/Facilitation
- ❖ Enhancing Economic Diplomacy
- ❖ Network Development
- ❖ Creating more visibility by bringing a Holistic Communication Strategy
- ❖ Capacity Building and Peer-to-Peer learning for Africa

- *Trade in Services*

Trade in services statistics is compiled by the Bank within the framework of the Balance of Payments statistics based on IMF BMP 6 manual. The Trade in Services data is released on a quarterly basis in the Balance of Payments statistics on the Bank's website except for tourism earnings, which is disseminated on a monthly basis in the Monthly Statistical Bulletin.

Data for the Trade in Services is mostly collected through returns submitted by banks and other regulatees, namely, money changers and foreign exchange dealers. For the transport sector, data are culled through the quarterly Transport survey. Currently trade in services statistics by country breakdown is not available.

- *Merchandise Trade Statistics*

External Merchandise Trade Statistics are compiled in compliance with the United Nations Statistical recommendation according to **the General Trade System** as recommended by the United Nations.

Commodities are classified according to the Harmonised coding System (HS) 2022. For economic analysis and international comparison data are classified and published according to the Standard International Trade Classifications (SITC), Revision 4. Trade statistics are released on a monthly, quarterly and yearly basis.

(v) Participants at the workshop

Representatives of regional and international organisations, government ministries and departments, the Bank of Mauritius, the Financial Services Commission, the private sector, academia, representatives of trade unions and the media were present.

Statistics Mauritius
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