# SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE STATISTICS BOARD

# ON THE OCCASION OF AFRICAN STATISTICS DAY 2026

## 18 November 2026

The Director of Statistics,
Statistics Board members,
Representatives of Ministries and Government Institutions,
Development Partners,
Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and privilege to address you today, as we join our fellow nations across the continent, to commemorate the 36th African Statistics Day.

Every year, this occasion reminds us of a fundamental truth.

Sound policies, effective governance, and sustainable development are impossible without reliable, timely, and independent statistics.

Statistics are not simply numbers in tables or spreadsheets. They are the compass by which we navigate our nation's future. They provide the evidence we need to understand where we stand, identify emerging risks, and guide us toward decisions that improve the well-being of every citizen.

This year, our celebration is anchored in a theme that is not an abstract continental aspiration, but an immediate, lived reality for every household, farm and business in Mauritius: **"Institutionalizing water and sanitation statistics for sustainable and climate-resilient development in Africa."**

Water is life. Safe sanitation is dignity. Together, they form the bedrock of public health, environmental resilience, agricultural productivity, and economic stability.

This year's theme is particularly relevant and could not be timelier for us.

According the latest Housing and Population Census, access to safe water and sanitation is almost universal in Mauritius. However, we are currently experiencing one of the most severe episodes of water stress of our recent history. Prolonged dry spells, erratic rainfall, and mounting demand are placing significant strain on our water supply network.

It is precisely through official statistics that we are able to move beyond anecdotes and grasp the true scale, complexity, and urgency of the crisis objectively.

Let me highlight a few key statistics:

(i) First, rainfall has declined significantly.
Mean rainfall across the island fell by 16.6% in 2025 — dropping from 2,180 millimeters to 1,830 millimeters. In volumetric terms, that translates to some 675 million cubic meters less rainwater falling on our island in a single year.

(ii) Second, reservoir levels have reached critical levels.
By early November 2026, overall storage across our main reservoirs dropped below the 50% threshold, compared to 84% last year.

(iii) Third, demand and system losses compound the problem:

> With total annual water utilization estimated at around 910 million cubic meters — divided almost evenly among domestic, industrial, and tourism needs at 37%, hydropower at 32%, and agriculture at 31%, every single drop counts.
>
> Yet, some 60% of abstracted water is lost through the distribution network.

They show us that our water challenge is both climatic and structural.

When more than **40,000 households** apply for water tank grants to secure basic daily storage, the figures become a direct measure of vulnerability, social equity, and economic risk.

At the same time, we must pay equal attention to the second pillar of today's theme, which is safe sanitation systems.

Water availability and sanitation are two sides of the same coin. During periods of severe water scarcity, maintaining adequate hygiene at home, in schools, hospitals, and workplaces becomes harder…

…while reduced river flows diminish the natural dilution of pollutants.

In a Small Island Developing State like Mauritius, where our economy and identity are closely tied to our coastal zone, safe sanitation and wastewater management are particularly important.

Reliable statistics on sewerage connections, wastewater treatment, effluent volumes and coastal water quality are therefore equally essential. They allow us to assess whether our sanitation systems are protecting public health and our environment.

If we are to achieve the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063—*The Africa We Want*—and meet our commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 6, we cannot manage our water and sanitation systems without reliable evidence.

We must measure what matters with precision, frequency, and transparency, and ensure that the evidence reaches our decision makers.

High-quality and timely official statistics can help us shift from reactive emergency rationing to long-term structural resilience.

And the Statistics Board remains deeply committed to ensuring that our National Statistical System rises to meet these challenges.

Just last month, statistical leaders from across the continent gathered in Addis Ababa for the 10th Session of the Statistical Commission for Africa under the theme *"Unleashing the value of data in Africa."* The message was clear: African statistical systems must modernize, integrate new data sources, and safeguard professional independence.

Statistics Mauritius is responding to that call.

Over the past year, it has taken bold steps to transform how data are produced, integrated, and shared. Strengthened legal frameworks, together with digital platforms such as MauStats, will certainly help to reduce institutional silos and improve access to information.

By bringing together environmental and meteorological records, economic indicators, geospatial mapping, and household survey data into a unified, accessible ecosystem, we can provide decision-makers, researchers, and citizens with a clearer visibility into the realities on the ground.

Looking ahead, we must go further.

We should harness emerging technologies—combining satellite imagery, Geographic Information Systems, and smart metering data alongside with traditional administrative records and other sources — to provide near-real-time insights into water storage, distribution and consumption, and climate vulnerability.

However, Statistics Mauritius cannot achieve this alone.

Data on water and sanitation come from multiple institutions, including those responsible for water resources, public utilities, meteorology, health, agriculture, and environment.

Hence the need for closer collaboration with the various stakeholders.

Timely administrative reporting, inter-operable systems, and a strong culture of open data sharing are essential if we are to transform data into effective actions.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Securing sustainable water availability and safe sanitation for present and future generations is one of the defining tests of our time.

Our response must be informed by evidence.

Let us therefore use this African Statistics Day to reaffirm our commitment to a statistical system that is independent, trusted, timely and responsive to national priorities.

And, most importantly, let us ensure that those statistics are translated into decisions that build a more resilient, equitable and water-secure Mauritius.

Before ending, I wish to commend the producers of Official Statistics for some notable achievements during the year.

(i) The adherence to the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) Plus, the highest tier of the IMF's Data Standards Initiatives in March - to become the first country in Africa and the 32nd country globally to achieve this milestone in data transparency.

This underscores the country's commitment to data transparency vis-a-vis the public, markets and international community.

Producers involved in this initiative are Statistics Mauritius, Bank of Mauritius, the Ministry of Finance and the Financial Services Commission.

(ii) The release of the first-ever National Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index in July by Statistics Mauritius.

(iii) The adoption of methodologies of the latest UN System of National Accounts (the SNA 2025) in September by Statistics Mauritius. The work is ongoing and will be completed in 2029. And,

(iv) The launching by the Bank of Mauritius of its official statistical data platform (BOMStats) in September, replacing the traditional static file downloads with a modern data hub with interactive dashboards, customs chart generation, and data visualization tools.

I also wish to acknowledge here the dedication and professionalism of the staff of Statistics Mauritius and other producers of official statistics for their contribution to the development of our National Statistical System.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On this concluding note, I thank you for your attention and wish you all a productive and impactful African Statistics Day.

I now declare this workshop open.

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