



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2025/092

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

**While activities of the African Centre for
Statistics were in alignment with applicable
mandates, there was a need for further
strengthening of section-level work planning,
project management, and evaluation
practices to enhance ECA support to Member
States**

**29 December 2025
Assignment No. AN2025-710-01**

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of support provided by ECA to strengthen statistical and geospatial systems across Member States. The audit covered the period from January 2023 to June 2025 and reviewed: (a) work planning and prioritization of activities; (b) work plan implementation, monitoring and reporting; and (c) project and administrative management.

Overall, ACS established strategic alignment with its mandates, supported by integrated planning frameworks and notable progress in implementing activities. ACS achieved key performance indicators, provided targeted support to 36 countries during the audit period, and advanced initiatives, including national geospatial frameworks and the modernization of statistical systems. However, key issues were identified that could impede its efficiency and effectiveness. These included the absence of section-level work plans, lack of a centralized repository and prioritization mechanism for Member State requests, and inadequate follow-up on recommendations of the Statistical Commission for Africa. Project management practices needed strengthening, particularly in leveraging Umoja's Integrated Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting (IPMR) module and ensuring the evaluation of projects that meet the criteria.

OIOS made six recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, ACS needed to:

- Develop detailed work plans for each section that include all planned tasks and activities along with the responsible staff and timeframes for completion.
- Establish a monitoring mechanism to track the status of Statistical Commission for Africa recommendations and ensure it is regularly updated and presented at each session.

In addition, ECA needed to:

- Establish a centralized repository to record, assess and track Member State requests, supported by a prioritization mechanism to address them effectively.
- Ensure the inclusion of evaluation requirements in budgets of qualifying extrabudgetary projects.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive training plan to ensure effective use of the IPMR module as the primary project management tool.
- Strengthen budget monitoring practices for projects funded by the regular programme of technical cooperation.

ECA accepted all recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the African Centre for Statistics (ACS) at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).
2. ECA supports evidence-based policymaking and decision-making in Africa by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on key economic and social indicators, including population, national accounts, prices, trade and health. Through ACS, ECA collaborates with national statistical offices in African countries to provide technical assistance to Member States, helping them strengthen their statistical capacities by supporting the development of robust, sustainable, and adaptable statistical systems. These are essential for meeting the growing demand for high-quality data to support the implementation, monitoring, and reporting on both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.
3. ECA also serves as the secretariat for the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom-Africa), an intergovernmental body established in 2005, as the highest decision-making body on statistical matters in Africa. It is responsible for setting statistical standards, promoting best practices in data and statistical concepts and methods, and supporting their implementation at national, subregional, and regional levels. StatCom-Africa comprises the heads of the national statistical offices of ECA Member States. It convenes biennially, with the latest sessions held in 2022 and 2024.
4. ACS operates under mandates derived from several key resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/6 on strengthening statistical capacity, ECA Commission resolution 849 (XL) on building statistical capacity in Africa, and other thematic resolutions related to harmonization of statistics, population and housing censuses, and geospatial information management. In line with these mandates ACS supports African national statistical systems in transforming their data governance and management methods; maintains and regularly updates publicly accessible databases, providing harmonized data, statistics and geospatial information; provides training and makes platforms available for the exchange of best practices; integrates policy advice and sustained capacity-building activities; and promotes communication and advocacy to enhance the use of statistics and geospatial information among Member States.
5. ACS, which operates as subprogramme 4 on data and statistics, is organized into four sections: (a) Economic, Infrastructure & Agriculture Statistics section, (b) Geospatial Information Management System Unit (GIMS unit), (c) Demographic and Social Statistics Section, and (d) Statistical Development, Data Innovation & Outreach Section (SDDIO). Table 1 presents the budget and staffing information for the subprogramme.

Table 1: Regular budget and extrabudgetary resources for subprogramme 4 (amounts in United States dollars)

Subprogramme 4: Data and Statistics	2023	2024	2025
Regular budget	5,151,800	5,742,600	5,742,600
Posts	4,620,100	5,146,300	5,146,300
Non-post	531,700	596,300	596,300
Extrabudgetary	4,099,900	3,520,800	967,600
Total	9,251,700	9,263,400	6,710,200
Regular budget posts	36	36	36
Extrabudgetary posts	6	6	4
Total	42	42	40

Source: Proposed programme budgets of ECA (Sect. 18)

6. Activities carried out by ACS are funded by the regular budget, and through the regular programme of technical cooperation (RPTC) and Development Account, under Sections 23 and 35, respectively, and extrabudgetary resources.

7. ACS developed the ECA’s statistical data portal (ECStats),¹ a centralized statistical platform designed to collect, validate, and disseminate socio-economic data across African countries. The portal provides access to statistical data across 25 main topics and 6,782 indicators, offering features such as country profiles, thematic dashboards, dashboards on targets and indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063, as well as downloadable datasets. The data is compiled from national statistical systems of Member States and from over 25 regional and international agencies’ sources, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, United Nations system entities, and international non-governmental organizations. In addition, ACS uses Umoja for administrative transactions, and the Umoja Integrated Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting (IPMR) module to manage extrabudgetary projects.

8. Comments provided by ECA are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

9. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of support provided by ECA ACS to Member States to strengthen the production, dissemination and use of data, statistics, and geospatial information.

10. This audit was included in the 2025 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to the risk that ECA may not have implemented adequate and effective processes to achieve its objectives.

11. OIOS conducted this audit from July to October 2025. The audit covered the period from January 2023 to June 2025 and reviewed: (a) work planning and prioritization of activities; (b) work plan implementation, monitoring and reporting; and (c) project and administrative management.

12. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; and (d) sample testing of capacity-building projects and administrative processes.

¹<https://ecastats.uneca.org/data>

13. To assess the reliability of data, OIOS: (a) conducted a walkthrough of the ECASStats portal to review key business capabilities and system features; (b) reviewed related documentation; and (c) interviewed staff responsible for the portal. Based on the review, OIOS determined that the data was sufficiently reliable for the purpose of addressing audit objectives.

14. The audit was conducted in accordance with the Global Internal Audit Standards.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Work planning and prioritization of activities

Annual divisional work planning improved and was aligned with ACS' strategic framework

15. ECA established a well-structured and centrally coordinated annual work planning process across its subprogrammes, led by the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division (SPORD). As one of ECA's subprogrammes, ACS participated in two interrelated planning exercises: (a) programme plans and budget (PPB), aligned with the United Nations' regular budget cycle; and (b) annual business plan (ABP), which served as its main planning and accountability tool. ABP encompassed activities from all funding sources and formed the foundation for quarterly Accountability and Programme Performance Review Meetings (APPRMs), where progress was reported and monitored. Additionally, the ABP provided a detailed elaboration of ACS' roles and responsibilities, organized around four planned result areas; each aligned with the work of an ACS section.

16. The Medium-Term Statistics Plan (MTSP, 2025-2027), endorsed by StatCom-Africa in 2024,² served as the primary strategic framework guiding ACS's medium-term priorities. It was structured around three interconnected components: (a) strong business processes at the country level; (b) modernization and transformation of statistical systems; and (c) strong data culture, governance, and policy. OIOS review indicated that overall, ABP deliverables were well aligned with the activities outlined in the MTSP. Also, the 2025 ABP addressed key concerns and thematic priorities highlighted in the 2024 StatCom-Africa documents. Furthermore, both the MTSP and ABP included results, activities, and deliverables related to the 13 thematic recommendations outlined in the 2024 StatCom-Africa report, covering areas such as the system of national accounts, civil registration and vital statistics, gender statistics, and geospatial integration.

17. OIOS also conducted a comparative analysis of ABPs and PPBs, focusing on the alignment of objectives, planned results (outcomes), performance indicators and targets, and deliverables (outputs). The review found that the three planned results in PPB were fully aligned with the four result areas in ABP, with ABP including an additional result area to reflect the work of all four ACS sections. While alignment at the results level was strong, the review also identified instances where some PPB deliverables were missing from ABP, which may hinder performance monitoring, complicate progress tracking, and reduce transparency in resource use and reporting.

18. OIOS was informed that the discrepancies were limited to the category of "field and technical cooperation projects," which occurred only in 2024, primarily due to ambiguity in defining field projects. In response, ECA issued a revised guidance note for preparing the 2025 ABP, describing deliverable categories and providing examples for each. This improved alignment between the two planning documents in 2025.

² E/ECA/STATCOM/9/2024/14 and E/ECA/STATCOM/9/2024/17

Annual work planning at the section level needed improvement

19. While work planning at the division level improved, a review of ACS' annual work planning practices at the section level revealed that among the four sections, only the Economic, Infrastructure, and Agriculture Statistics Section had developed a comprehensive section-level workplan. This plan included detailed activities, assigned lead and support staff, and estimated timeframes for task completion. In the absence of formal section work plans, the remaining sections relied on ABP as the basis for developing staff members' individual work plans. Informal mechanisms were also used to assign and monitor tasks, including online task trackers (e.g., Microsoft Planner used by SDDIO), team meetings, and ad hoc discussions.

20. Although ABP was structured around four planned result areas, each corresponding to the work of one ACS section, it did not fully capture the breadth of activities carried out throughout the year. Section chiefs interviewed noted that they typically undertook more activities than those outlined in ABP. Additionally, ACS indicated that it may not be possible to reflect ad hoc tasks in ABP, as these often arose unpredictably throughout the year and fell outside the formal planning cycle.

21. In the absence of structured and coordinated work planning at the section level, the actual workload and responsibilities of each section may be inadequately represented, impeding accurate assessment of resource requirements, effective performance monitoring, and identification of discrepancies between workload and available resources.

(1) ECA African Centre for Statistics should enhance its annual work planning process by developing detailed work plans for each section that include all planned tasks and activities along with the responsible staff and timeframes for completion.

ECA accepted recommendation 1 and stated that ACS would enhance its annual work planning process by expanding the ABP to include responsible staff and timeframes for completion of each deliverable.

Need for a centralized repository supported by a prioritization mechanism to record, assess, programme and track support requests from Member States

22. ACS receives frequent and simultaneous support requests from Member States, through various channels, including: (a) formal requests addressed to the Office of the Executive Secretary or directly to the ACS Director; and (b) informal requests made during ACS events or conversations with the Director or section chiefs. These requests are made throughout the year and are often unpredictable and ad hoc, outside of established annual work planning cycles. Additionally, the nature and complexity of these requests vary significantly across countries, depending on each country's level of statistical development. This makes it difficult to incorporate them into ABP, creating challenges in resource allocation and workload management. While ACS makes efforts to fulfill all requests, its limited financial and human resources require a structured approach to prioritization.

23. At the time of the audit, ACS lacked a centralized repository to track and manage Member State requests. Key information was not systematically recorded, including: (a) the type of request (e.g., technical assistance, policy support, training); (b) the status of assessment (e.g., pending or under review, approved, completed); and (c) the section or staff responsible for handling the request. As a result, there was no systematic process to analyze and categorize requests, determine ACS actions based on priorities and availability of resources, and track progress. In the absence of a centralized repository, ACS handled incoming requests through discussions between the director and section chiefs. They assigned requests to the relevant sections without a systematic approach. Once a request received approval from senior management, the designated section would carry out the activities; however, the process documentation

often lacked consistency. Implementing a centralized tracking repository, combined with a structured prioritization mechanism, would significantly enhance ACS' planning and service delivery.

(2) ECA should establish a centralized repository to record, assess and track Member State requests, supported by a prioritization mechanism to address them effectively.

ECA accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it was in the process of establishing a central repository to capture all technical support requests from Member States, regional economic communities, the African Union, and other stakeholders, which would also address a prior RPTC evaluation recommendation for a coordinated mechanism to record, track and report such requests.

B. Work plan implementation, monitoring and reporting

ACS made notable progress in implementing activities on its work plan

24. During the audit period, ACS advanced implementation of its mandate to strengthen data, statistics, and geospatial information systems across Africa by maintaining publicly accessible databases, delivering training and policy advice, and promoting the use of statistical and geospatial data for evidence-based decision-making.

25. OIOS review of the 2024 annual performance report noted that ACS achieved five out of six indicators of achievement and provided targeted support to 36 countries. Accomplishments included the development of national geospatial frameworks through technical support to African countries, the implementation of digital transformation roadmaps for official statistics, and assistance to some countries in finalizing their national open SDG platforms. In the area of economic statistics, ACS facilitated the adoption of the 2008 System of National Accounts and supported the integration of trade data into the Trade in Value-Added database. Additionally, ACS advanced civil registration and legal identity initiatives, coordinated expert group meetings, and launched mentorship programmes to improve data completeness.

Follow-up on recommendations of the Statistical Commission for Africa needed to be strengthened

26. The effective implementation of StatCom-Africa's recommendations requires a transparent and accountable monitoring framework that includes structured follow-up mechanisms, clear documentation of progress, and timelines.

27. During its eighth session in 2022, StatCom-Africa adopted a series of recommendations documented in the annex to the "Report of the Statistical Commission for Africa on the work of its eighth session."³ To report on the status and progress made on these recommendations, a follow-up report⁴ was presented at the ninth session in 2024, summarizing developments across various thematic areas of statistical development.

28. ACS maintained a formal structure for monitoring and reporting, including biennial follow-up reports on previous recommendations, session reports summarizing conclusions and new recommendations. However, the mechanisms for tracking implementation remained inadequate and needed to be strengthened to ensure accountability and effectiveness. The follow-up report presented at the ninth session notably omitted 8 out of 20 recommendations addressed to ECA during the eighth session, including entire thematic

³ E/ECA/STATCOM/8/2022/13 & E/ECA/COE/41/12

⁴ E/ECA/STATCOM/9/2024/13

areas such as “Initiatives to Modernize and Transform Statistical Systems” and the “Takwimu Young African Statisticians Programme.”

(3) ECA African Centre for Statistics should establish a centralized monitoring mechanism to track the status of Statistical Commission for Africa recommendations detailing actions taken, responsible entities, timelines, and progress status, and ensure it is regularly updated and presented at each session.

ECA accepted recommendation 3.

ACS would benefit from implementing and utilizing usage analytics for the ECASStats portal

29. Mechanisms that track usage metrics and gather user feedback help to maximize the value and impact of platforms like ECASStats by providing insights into user engagement, informing strategic decisions to continuously enhance platform effectiveness, and guiding resource allocation. International guidelines and best practices⁵ emphasize the importance of utilizing both objective indicators, such as the number of website visits and downloads of statistical data, and subjective feedback from user satisfaction surveys to assess the value and effectiveness of disseminated official statistics.

30. Despite its comprehensive design, the ECASStats portal lacked an integrated framework to monitor and analyze user engagement. The absence of real-time usage analytics, such as website visits, downloads by domain/topic, or publication downloads, limited ECA’s ability to evaluate the portal’s reach and impact. This was primarily attributed to the portal’s initial focus on internal use, resource limitations, and the lack of a coordinated approach for usage monitoring.

31. ACS conducted stakeholder surveys in 2021 and 2023 covering its products and services, including the ECASStats portal. These surveys targeted national statistics offices, regional economic communities, mapping and geographic information systems officials, civil registration officials, and statistical training centres. While the results showed a positive trend in awareness and usage, they also revealed that a significant number of respondents were unfamiliar with the portal or did not actively engage with its content. For example, in 2021, 40 per cent of respondents (21 out of 53) reported “rarely” accessing the portal, and in 2023, 25 per cent (36 out of 143) indicated that they “don’t use/have never seen” it. ACS also conducted an internal user needs assessment on the ECASStats portal in March–April 2022, targeting internal users across ECA divisions and sub-regional offices to understand their data requirements and priorities.

32. A structured usage analytics framework would enhance ECA’s ability to accurately assess the reach, impact, and effectiveness of the ECASStats portal, helping ensure that the portal is fully utilized by key stakeholders, including Member States, researchers, and policymakers. During the audit, ACS agreed to establish a website usage analytics tool to monitor the usage of the portal and has already initiated steps towards its implementation.

ACS agreed to strengthen coordination within Opportunity/Issue-Based Coalition-1

33. The Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) for Africa, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General and co-chaired by the ECA Executive Secretary and United Nations Development Programme Regional Director, is a regional coordination mechanism that brings together all United Nations system entities operating across the continent. It oversees six Opportunity Issue-Based Coalitions (OIBCs), which serve as

⁵ E.g., “Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems” by the Statistics Division, in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and “Recommendations for Promoting, Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics” by Economic Commission for Europe

thematic working groups focused on the region's key priorities. One of these, OIBC-1, titled "Strengthened Integrated Data and Statistical Systems for Sustainable Development," is co-chaired by ACS, in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund and UN Women. Its main objective is to foster an integrated data ecosystem that enhances the effectiveness of policy and programme delivery by generating, disseminating, and using quality data to monitor progress toward the SDGs and the goals of Agenda 2063.

34. According to the terms of reference issued on 31 August 2020, OIBC-1 members are expected to meet at least once a month to support joint planning and implementation. Between January 2023 and June 2025, OIBC-1 convened only two times, with the most recent meeting held on 28 February 2025. The joint annual work plan for 2024 and 2025 outlined three flagship initiatives, each with two strategic outputs to be delivered collaboratively by three or more United Nations system entities. In 2024, two strategic outputs were fully implemented, and four were partially.

35. ACS informed that there was a decline in engagement within OIBC-1 and attributed this to the absence of dedicated financial resources, which had hindered the coalition's ability to implement joint initiatives. Meetings had increasingly focused on sharing updates rather than executing collaborative projects. As a result, participating entities have tended to prioritize their individual mandates, with limited emphasis on inter-agency collaboration.

36. Lack of coordinated efforts could result in the joint workplan not being delivered as intended, leading to fragmented actions and a diminished impact of the United Nations system's support for African countries in strengthening their data and statistical systems.

37. ECA agreed to enhance the convening of OIBC-1 meetings in line with its terms of reference, leveraging its Systems Wide Coherence Section (Task Force 3) and the Knowledge Management Services Section (Task Force 2) to provide ACS with the necessary technical and coordination support in this effort.

ACS was enhancing monitoring and reporting mechanisms

38. Organized by SPORD across all subprogrammes, ECA's quarterly APPRMs formed the basis of its integrated monitoring and reporting framework. ACS also held monthly divisional management team meetings during which section chiefs and project leaders (statisticians), met with the Director to review progress on the work plan and address challenges. Meeting notes and action items were documented.

39. While these monitoring and reporting structures were adequate and well-coordinated, the audit identified a few discrepancies in the reported achievements across different reports. Reporting processes remained largely manual, and frequent changes to reporting templates further complicated year-on-year tracking of planned deliverables. These inconsistencies appeared to result from extensive iterative exchanges between SPORD and the subprogramme focal points, which sometimes contributed to misalignment in data collection and interpretation.

40. ACS informed OIOS that an automated tool was being developed and presented to SPORD to replace manual templates, as part of ongoing efforts to modernize and streamline the planning and reporting processes. Although this tool has not yet been used and discussions were still underway, it was anticipated that its adoption would reduce manual workload and improve data accuracy.

ECA needed to strengthen the implementation of its evaluation policy

41. The Monitoring, Reporting and Evaluation Section (MRES), which operates under SPORD, is responsible for managing and conducting evaluations. As indicated in ECA's 2026 PPB, MRES plans to evaluate subprogramme 4 on data and statistics during the 2026 cycle.

42. In 2020, SPORD developed an evaluation policy for ECA that outlined the evaluation framework, including its guiding principles, operational procedures, and roles and responsibilities. The evaluation policy stipulates that extrabudgetary projects should allocate a dedicated amount of the total project expenditure for evaluation activities, to be conducted at project completion and commissioned and managed by ECA.

43. OIOS review of four sampled extrabudgetary projects implemented by ACS, each exceeding \$1 million, indicated that the budgets for two of them included provision to conduct evaluations on completion by ECA; for the third project, the donor would conduct the evaluation; but for the fourth, no evaluation was planned by either ECA or the donor. Interviews with ECA staff indicated that earlier engagement of MRES in the project design phase could facilitate the consistent inclusion of evaluation requirements in relevant documents of qualifying projects. The absence of consistent final evaluations undermines ECA's ability to assess project effectiveness, capture lessons learned and demonstrate accountability to stakeholders.

(4) ECA should develop a mechanism to institutionalize coordination between project design teams and the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division to ensure the inclusion of evaluation requirements in budgets of qualifying extrabudgetary projects.

ECA accepted recommendation 4 and stated that the 2024 standard operating procedure on improving the quality and effectiveness of extrabudgetary programme design, appraisal, and approval would be applied to ensure institutional coordination between project design teams and SPORD. Also, the revised evaluation policy will be finalized and piloted throughout 2026 for new extrabudgetary funded projects, with its lessons to be reviewed at the end of 2026.

C. Project and administrative management

ECA initiated the approval process for its resource mobilization strategy

44. In June 2025, the Partnership and Resource Mobilization Section (PRMS) developed a resource mobilization strategy for ECA, outlining engagement and funding approaches for six priority partner types, including philanthropic organizations and climate funds. Although the strategy was still pending approval by the Senior Leadership Team, it was already being used as a guiding document to shape partnership dialogues and coordinate resource mobilization through integrated extrabudgetary programmes involving multiple divisions and entities.

45. Within this framework, ACS developed a multi-year programme (2025–2028) to strengthen statistical and geospatial systems across Member States, supporting evidence-based policymaking and sustainable development. The programme was intended to be funded by extrabudgetary resources through strategic partnerships, including collaboration with international financial institutions and the private sector, with an estimated budget of \$9.9 million.

Need for comprehensive training to enhance the utilization of IPMR in managing extrabudgetary projects

46. ACS received extrabudgetary funding from both public and private sector sources, earmarked for various regional initiatives. Between January 2023 and August 2025, ACS managed 12 projects totalling approximately \$13.3 million. OIOS reviewed a sample of four projects, with budgets totalling \$7.5 million and implementation periods spanning 18 to 39 months. The review assessed alignment of the focus of projects with ACS priorities, criteria for country selection, and timeliness and completeness of narrative and financial reporting to donors, in line with the contribution agreements. Overall, the review concluded

that apart from some delays, the projects were aligned with ACS strategic priorities and were generally implemented in line with the requirements of the contribution agreement.

47. ACS used IPMR during the project planning stage, including initiating projects in the system, creating logframes, and establishing linkages to SDGs. However, OIOS observed that IPMR features were not fully utilized, particularly those designed for monitoring and reporting. Progress on expected project outputs was not monitored in any of the four projects reviewed, and while grant agreements were uploaded for three of the projects, other essential documents, such as narrative and financial reports required by donors, were not included for any of the four projects, even though the reports were submitted to donors as required.

48. Also, according to the ECA Programme and Project Management Manual, project risks are required to be clearly identified in a risk register to ensure systematic assessment, tracking, and mitigation throughout the project life cycle. IPMR includes a functionality to record and track risks. Among the four sampled projects, one or two risks per project were included in IPMR; however, mitigation measures were not documented, and risk monitoring was not conducted throughout the project life cycle. For example, a no-cost extension was requested for two of the four sampled projects. Had key risks been identified and actively monitored, challenges could have been anticipated and mitigated more effectively, potentially reducing delays. The opportunity to fully leverage IPMR's functionalities for enhanced planning, monitoring, and risk management was missed.

49. ACS explained that IPMR was not being fully utilized by ACS staff because there were several monitoring and reporting requirements by different stakeholders (headquarters, donors, and ECA internally), placing a significant burden on users. In addition, there was limited hands-on training on IPMR, and accountability mechanisms to ensure its utilization were insufficient.

(5) ECA should develop and implement a comprehensive training plan, including relevant hands-on training sessions, to ensure effective use of the Integrated Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting module as the primary project management tool.

ECA accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it would encourage relevant users to complete the recommended IPMR courses. SPORD will develop and implement a training plan that includes hands-on sessions in 2026, in collaboration with Headquarters IPMR focal points.

There was a need for a robust budget monitoring mechanism for RPTC projects

50. ECA is one of the 11 entities implementing RPTC, a mechanism that delivers targeted, demand-driven technical assistance to Member States, often in response to strategic urgent needs. Funded through Section 23 of the regular budget, RPTC enables rapid policy and technical advice, capacity development, and knowledge exchange, including virtual trainings and advisory services. At ECA, SPORD coordinates RPTC planning, review, and reporting processes, guided by the RPTC Management Framework, which includes internal calls for proposals, technical reviews, and assessments by the ECA RPTC Review Committee before submitting the recommended proposals to the Executive Secretary for approval. Once approved, project coordinators implement and monitor activities, submitting final project reports to SPORD. These are consolidated into an ECA-wide report and submitted to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for inclusion in the UN-wide RPTC progress report.

51. The Finance and Budget Section (FBS) at ECA allocates resources to the divisions in accordance with the approved proposals and corresponding amounts. These allocations are managed through the internal order mechanism, providing flexibility and efficiency in fund utilization. Additionally, FBS

monitors resource utilization, provides regular updates on budget execution, and assists divisions in redeploying resources to adjust the cost breakdown as required by various operational considerations.

52. In 2023 and 2024, ACS implemented 12 RPTC projects totaling \$1.34 million: 7 projects in 2023 totaling \$642,000, and 5 projects in 2024 totaling \$695,000. Budget monitoring for these projects was conducted internally by a senior programme management assistant in the Office of the Director, using Excel spreadsheets, with updates presented to the monthly divisional management team meetings. However, all ACS RPTC projects were managed under one internal order number per calendar year. Although this allowed flexibility to reallocate funds between projects, it limited visibility and control at the individual project level. This pooled budgeting approach required manual matching of expenditures in Umoja to specific projects, making expenditure tracking inefficient and increasing the risk of overspending or misallocation on one project at the expense of another within ACS, particularly when the Division implements more than one project in a given year.

53. This arrangement was mainly attributed to the non-usage of work breakdown structure elements/categories in Umoja for individual RPTC projects, which prevented more granular reporting and real-time budget oversight at the project level. However, their usage would entail additional administrative processes in Umoja, such as approvals for fund movements, which could affect operational agility.

(6) ECA should strengthen its budget monitoring practices for projects funded by the regular programme of technical cooperation by establishing mechanisms that facilitate project-level financial oversight, while allowing for operational efficiency.

ECA accepted recommendation 6 and stated that FBS regularly followed up with divisions on their utilization of RPTC project-allocated resources and regularly reported to ECA Senior Leadership Team, which reviews utilization progress in dedicated sessions. ECA will explore ways to strengthen project-level oversight without micromanaging implementing divisions.

ACS could improve documentation practices related to the engagement of consultants and individual contractors

54. The administrative instruction ST/AI/2013/4/Rev.1 on consultants and individual contractors outlines the mandatory provisions applicable to individual contracts. These include terms of reference (TORs) that describe the selection process, contractual terms and conditions, and responsibilities of departments and offices.

55. Between 2023 and 2025, ACS engaged 139 consultants and individual contractors, issuing 210 contracts totaling approximately \$3.8 million. OIOS reviewed documentation for a sample of 21 consultants and individual contractors (covering 23 contracts/purchase orders) across 6 RPTC and 4 extrabudgetary projects. The review found that: (a) TORs were prepared and included in job openings; (b) technical evaluation reports along with comparative analyses were mostly available in the form of transmittal memos, demonstrating competitive selection; (c) contracts were generally approved, although in a few cases, they were signed only by human resources officers and not by the consultants; and (d) performance evaluations were mostly conducted, but in some instances, final evaluation reports were either not kept or missing signatures.

56. At the time of the audit, there was no centralized system (e.g., SharePoint folder) at ACS to track consultant documentation, resulting in inadequate documentation practices. OIOS observed that documents were scattered across various project managers and administrative assistants, with no designated focal point. This decentralized approach complicated document retrieval, particularly for performance evaluations, which were not stored in Inspira. Among other uses, performance evaluation reports help guide decisions

on future reengagement of consultants and individual contractors. ACS could benefit from establishing a centralized system to record and manage documentation across all stages of consultant engagement, including TORs, technical evaluations, signed contracts, and performance evaluation reports.

57. ECA acknowledged the need for a centralized repository for ACS' documentation on consultants and individual contractors, following a standardized taxonomy recommended by the Human Resources Recruitment Unit. ECA informed that this approach could also be extended to the recruitment of interns.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

58. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of ECA for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁶ / Important ⁷	C/ O ⁸	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁹
1	ECA African Centre for Statistics should enhance its annual work planning process by developing detailed work plans for each section that include all planned tasks and activities along with the responsible staff and timeframes for completion.	Important	O	Receipt of 2026 section-level work plans including responsible staff and timeframes for completion of each deliverable.	31 March 2026
2	ECA should establish a centralized repository to record, assess and track Member State requests, supported by a prioritization mechanism to address them effectively.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of the established centralized repository supported by a prioritization mechanism to record, assess and track Member State requests.	30 June 2026
3	ECA African Centre for Statistics should establish a centralized monitoring mechanism to track the status of Statistical Commission for Africa recommendations detailing actions taken, responsible entities, timelines, and progress status, and ensure it is regularly updated and presented at each session.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of centralized monitoring mechanism to track the status of StatCom-Africa recommendations.	30 November 2026
4	ECA should develop a mechanism to institutionalize coordination between project design teams and the Strategic Planning, Oversight and Results Division to ensure the inclusion of evaluation requirements in budgets of qualifying extrabudgetary projects.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of coordination mechanism between the project design teams and SPORD to ensure the inclusion of evaluation requirements in budgets of qualifying extrabudgetary projects.	31 December 2026

⁶ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

⁷ Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

⁸ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁹ Date provided by ECA in response to recommendations.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ⁶ / Important ⁷	C/ O ⁸	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁹
5	ECA should develop and implement a comprehensive training plan, including relevant hands-on training sessions, to ensure effective use of the Integrated Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting module as the primary project management tool.	Important	O	Receipt of training plan, including details of planned hands-on sessions.	31 December 2026
6	ECA should strengthen its budget monitoring practices for projects funded by the regular programme of technical cooperation by establishing mechanisms that facilitate project-level financial oversight, while allowing for operational efficiency.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence of mechanisms to facilitate project-level financial oversight for projects funded by RPTC.	31 December 2026

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Management Response

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation Date	Client comments
1	ECA African Centre for Statistics should enhance its annual work planning process by developing detailed work plans for each section that include all planned tasks and activities along with the responsible staff and timeframes for completion.	Important	Yes	Director, African Centre for Statistics	March 2026	The African Centre for Statistics will enhance its annual work planning processes going forward. This will be done by expanding on its Annual Business Plan to include responsible staff and timeframes for completion of each deliverable.
2	ECA should establish a centralized repository to record, assess and track Member State requests, supported by a prioritization mechanism to address them effectively.	Important	Yes	Director, Strategic Planning, Oversight & Results Division (SPORD)	30 June 2026	ECA is currently in the process of establishing a centralized repository for all requests for technical support received from Member States, Regional Economic Communities, the African Union, and other stakeholders. This initiative directly responds to the OIOS recommendation from its recent evaluation of the RPTC across all Regional Commissions, which highlighted the critical need for a consolidated and coordinated mechanism to track, record, and report technical support requests
3	ECA African Centre for Statistics should establish a centralized	Important	Yes	Director/Statistician, Statistical	November 2026	No further comments.

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

Management Response

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation Date	Client comments
	monitoring mechanism to track the status of Statistical Commission for Africa recommendations detailing actions taken, responsible entities, timelines, and progress status, and ensure it is regularly updated and presented at each session.			Development, Data Innovation and Outreach Section (SDDIOS), ACS		
4	ECA should develop a mechanism to institutionalize coordination between project design teams and the Strategic Planning, Oversight, and Results Division to ensure the inclusion of evaluation requirements in budgets of qualifying extrabudgetary projects.	Important	Yes	Chief, Monitoring, Reporting & Evaluation Section (SPORD) & Chief Partnerships & Mobilization Section (PRMS)	31 December 2026	The ECA Evaluation Policy (under revision) guides the definition of qualifying XB projects. The Standard Operating Procedure on Improving the quality and effectiveness of XB programme design, appraisal and approval (approved in July 2024), will be applied to ensure the institutional coordination between the project design teams and SPORD for any new XB funded projects. The revised Evaluation Policy will be finalized in 2026 and the coordination mechanism will be piloted throughout 2026 for new XB funded projects, with its lessons to be reviewed at the end of 2026.
5	ECA should develop and implement a comprehensive training plan, including mandatory (if any) and recommended computer-based training and comprehensive hands-on	Important	Yes	For CBT: ECA Security Liaison Officer (SLO)	31 December 2026	There are currently no mandatory IPMR user CBT courses. However, ECA notes that the standard training, which is available via Umoja iLearn is

Management Response

Audit of the African Centre for Statistics at the Economic Commission for Africa

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation Date	Client comments
	training sessions, to ensure effective use of the Integrated Planning, Monitoring, and Reporting module as the primary project management tool.			For hands-on training Chief, Corporate Policy & Planning Section (SPORD)		essential for acquiring knowledge in IPMR. Therefore, the task would be to liaise with the ECA Security Liaison Officer (SLO) to ensure relevant users are encouraged to undertake the <i>recommended</i> courses. A suggested revision is made accordingly to the recommendation. To further strengthen staff proficiency, SPORD will develop and implement a training plan that includes hands-on sessions in 2026, in collaboration with HQ IPMR focal points.
6	ECA should strengthen its budget monitoring practices for projects funded by the regular programme of technical cooperation by establishing mechanisms that facilitate project-level financial oversight, while allowing for operational efficiency.	Important	Yes	Chief, Finance & Budget Section	31 December 2026	The Budget and Finance Section regularly follows up with divisions on their utilization of RTPC project-allocated resources and regularly reports to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of ECA. The SLT also has dedicated sessions to review progress on utilization rates. However, ECA will explore how to better strengthen project-level oversight without micro-managing the implementing division.