



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Nineteenth Inter-Agency and Expert Group Meeting
on Millennium Development Goals Indicators
New York, 16-17 February 2011**

Opening Statement

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Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Nineteenth Meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators. This group has continued to do excellent work in providing the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on the progress towards the MDGs and informing the political discussion related to the Goals. Our annual report on the MDGs has become the key reference point in assessing progress towards the Goals and is one of the most widely used UN publications.

I must put on record that the group has done a lot more than just preparing the data and analysis for the report. Over the years, the IAEG has responded to the requests by countries to assist them in improving data and tools to monitor the MDGs and to explain and resolve the differences between national and international data sets for MDG indicators. The transparency of methods used for data compilation and estimation has continued to improve. The Statistical Commission, at its last session, expressed full appreciation for the work done by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDGs and the United Nations Statistics Division in improving the transparency of methodologies for estimates and the coordination of national monitoring, addressing discrepancies between national and international data and using new technologies such as SDMX for MDG indicators.

The Statistical Commission has also expressed appreciation for the work done to establish a consultation process between countries and international agencies. The series of workshops initiated in 2008, to bring together experts from the international statistical system and national statisticians to review data gaps and differences between national and international data sets, has continued with encouraging results. The feedback from country participants has been consistently positive.

Only two weeks ago, some of you were together in San Jose, Costa Rica, with colleagues from ECLAC and other regional offices, including PAHO and CELADE,

engaging in very fruitful work sessions with countries from the Latin America and the Caribbean region. I wish to thank in particular our colleagues from ILO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank, whose contributions have made the workshop a success.

The Statistical Commission has requested us to establish an inventory of studies on discrepancies between national and international data, and to make such an inventory easily accessible on our website. We have established the inventory and I wish to thank those of you who have provided the information and encourage you all to continue to support this effort.

Finally, the group has effectively addressed the demand for training on MDG monitoring, including on tools on sub-national monitoring and on the use of SDMX for MDG Indicators. A Wiki application of the manual on MDG indicators is ready for countries to use as reference in their work to monitor MDGs at the national level.

As this is the nineteenth meeting, it is opportune for us to reflect on the past and the road ahead. The IAEG was established by the GA road map on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration which states that the group has the “aim of ensuring consultation and collaboration among all relevant institutions in providing the necessary data and analysis for the assessment of progress”. It also states that “the main purpose of such collaboration and consultation is to ensure a common assessment and understanding of the status of the millennium development goals at both the global and national levels”.

To fulfill this mandate, the group agreed in its previous meetings that: (1) all agencies would inform the IAEG in advance of any data releases; (2) no new data would be released before the MDG report release date, unless previously agreed with other IAEG members; (3) all UN reports based on or making reference to MDG data would use the IAEG sources.

Unfortunately, in recent years, we have had some instances when this was not the case. We need to rethink the way we operate and identify ways to ensure that all agencies members of the IAEG fully respect this agreement.

We are aware that the recently established Commission in Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health will propose a framework for accountability and intends to monitor five indicators that are already included in the MDG framework. While we welcome the establishment of commission for the contribution it can make to improving women's and child health, we remain firmly convinced that monitoring belongs to this group. Any exercise carried out outside the IAEG will only create duplications and undermine the progress we have made over the years in ensuring consistency among data sources and a continuous and transparent dialogue between international agencies and countries.

As we approach the beginning of this new round of reporting, it is crucial that we all make efforts to enhance our effective working partnership and remember that the purpose of our work is not only to provide the necessary data and analysis to track progress on the MDGs but, above all, to ensure that our monitoring work builds on our cooperation with countries and is closely linked to our efforts to strengthen national statistical capacity.

I wish you all a fruitful discussion and look forward to your deliberations.