



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Interagency and Expert Group Meeting  
on the Development of Gender Statistics  
New York, 12-14 December 2006**

### **Opening Statement**

Paul Cheung, Director  
United Nations Statistics Division

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to this important meeting, which is jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Bank. I also welcome to New York those of you visiting with us —from national statistical offices and other national institutions, regional commissions, development partner institutions and United Nations funds and programmes.

Last year, the fourth issue in *The World's Women* series was released. *The World's Women 2005*, unlike the three previous ones, focused progress in gender statistics since the start of the International Women's Decade, in 1975. The major conclusion from the assessment: is basically that there has been substantial progress in some areas, but overall we have not advanced far enough with the production and dissemination of the necessary gender statistics and indicators. Not only has progress been slow, but it seems that the major advances in the pre-Beijing period have slackened in the post-Beijing era.

What are the reasons for the change in pace in the development of gender statistics? To answer this question, we need to examine how the earlier achievements were attained. On our part, the look into the past takes us to the early 1980s when our programme in gender statistics began. The first set of publications reviewed the relevance of existing concepts and methods; and identified the basic set of statistics and indicators that would be required to assess the situation of women. We also prepared a compendium of 40 indicators that was distributed at the Third World Conference on Women, in Nairobi, with an accompanying wall chart. We have since engaged in a number of initiatives and programmes to foster the production of gender statistics and improve their use in policy making and monitoring:

- Produced methodological materials, studies, handbooks and manuals.

- Organized training workshops at the interregional, regional and national levels.
- Engaged with many partner agencies and national experts to develop methodologies and standards to better address gender differences and the specific situations of women in many areas.
- Compiled Statistics and indicators in a user-friendly database for wide dissemination.
- Undertook periodic analyses of the situation of women relative to men.
- Provided technical assistance to countries, agencies and other institutions.

Our successes in each of these areas of activity were primarily due to the good collaboration and support we had from United Nations funds and programmes, and development partners, and the cooperation with the national and regional institutions. It was then a global gender statistics programme.

Many, if not all, of us have successes of our own to recount. But we may also equally have identified some gaps and challenges. We should draw from the key lessons from the experiences and devise strategies to quicken the advancement of gender statistics.

In the next three days, we would like this group to propose a plan for a global gender statistics programme. The plan should, as a first step, address three main areas:

- Making effective use of the tools and materials currently available, and identifying missing components for development;
- Disseminating available statistics in the format and medium that would meet the needs of a wide range of users;
- Complementing efforts and sharing responsibilities among our respective institutions.

On the issue of making effective use of available materials, it would be important to consider ways of teaming up to support training activities. It is also necessary to determine ways to disseminate these technical tools and materials to those who need them the most: national statistical offices and gender focal points. We should also seek to establish a means of sharing information among all the stakeholders: national, regional and international institutions and communities.

Another critical issue is the dissemination of statistics. From our experience with the Women's Statistics and Indicators (Wistat) database, many user groups are interested in multi-sectoral datasets that facilitate research into different aspects of gender equality. It would be useful to agree on what will be the most suitable form for disseminating gender statistics. Such an output will consolidate components of the different datasets that agencies have. It will thus require agencies determine the set of statistics to be disseminated and agree to contribute their data to the pool. This arrangement has worked with the MDG programme and could be considered for gender statistics also.

Following the DevInfo model and the interagency collaboration that produced the MDGInfo, we propose that this meeting agree on modalities for producing a GenderInfo dataset as a joint initiative for enhancing the dissemination and use of gender statistics.

On a final note, a necessary condition for success in this work is the commitment to work together towards a common goal and set outputs. We should expect to leave this meeting with a resolve to work together in teams organized around our areas of interest and mandates. At the end of the meeting, we should know what can be expected of each other.

I wish you all successful deliberations. Thank you all for coming and for supporting this new initiative.