

Statement by Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations Statistics Division to the 38th Session of the Statistical Commission on the Occasion of its 60th Anniversary

New York, 27 February, 2007

Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is privileged to serve as the permanent secretariat of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Statistics Division, or affectionately and more popularly known as UNSD, has, over the years, diligently facilitated the functioning of the Commission and dutifully implemented the tasks assigned. For this anniversary session, we have prepared a brochure, which highlights the accomplishments of the Commission since 1947. We intend to widely disseminate this brochure to inform a broad audience about the importance of this body.

In the past 60 years, we have seen real progress in the establishment of the global statistical system, of which the Commission has firmly established itself as the apex entity. It is indeed a truly global professional body in which all member states are represented by their highest-ranking official statisticians and all statistical subject matters are discussed.

When the Commission first met in 1947, there was great concern on the need for professionalism and integrity in the national and international statistical services and the urgent requirements of statistical standards and methods. These concerns are still valid today, but a strong foundation has been laid by the Commission in the ensuing years. In 1994, the Commission formally codified the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics after many years of discussion. Today, this set of principles, together with the Principles Governing international Statistical Activities, provide a globally accepted code of conduct for our work in official statistics. We have seen many examples around the world on how the principles are being used to guide the development of national statistical systems or to shield official statistics from undesirable interventions.

The Commission's work on statistical methodology expressed in the form of standards and guidelines have greatly improved the quality and comparability of official statistics. There are many substantive areas that the Commission has engaged itself, from the system of national accounts to trade statistics, from population census to household surveys, from tourism statistics to resource accounting. The Commission's authority and credibility is based on the fact that it is able to harness the support of all member states in arriving at methodological consensus.

The impact of the Commission's work is clearly felt at the national level. There is no question that national statistical systems place great deal of importance on the decisions

reached by the Commission. As a result, we have seen rising support from the member states to the Commission. Today, we are pleased to see that over 130 countries, represented by their professional statisticians, are here to join the deliberation. This meeting here is truly a global event.

As the Commission enters its seventh decade, it can be proud of its achievements, and be very confident that its work is more relevant than ever before, as the demand for reliable, comparable, and high-quality statistical data continues to rise.

We at the UNSD are committed as ever before to serve the Commission and to facilitate the advancement of the global statistical system. This is our pledge.

Thank you.