



**UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA
AND THE PACIFIC**

**UNITED NATIONS WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL CLASSIFICATIONS
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**OPENING STATEMENT
by
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Distinguished Participants and Colleagues,

Good Morning,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Workshop on International Economic and Social Classifications, jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division and ESCAP. I am particularly delighted to see so many senior staff from National Statistical Agencies here. We are very pleased to bring you together to discuss the main changes in the International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities (ISIC) Revision 4 and the Central Product Classification (CPC) Version 2 as well as the strategy for their implementation.

I would like to thank the United Nations Statistics Division for providing financial and technical support for the organization of this workshop. We greatly appreciate the possibility of working together with UNSD in developing national statistical capacity in the Asia-Pacific region. Let me thank especially the workshop facilitators – Messrs. Ralf Becker and Marcel Van Kints from the UN Statistics Division.

A special welcome goes to Ms Lia Emalia, a colleague from the ASEAN Secretariat. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable work of the ASEAN Secretariat in steering the ASEAN Task Force on Harmonization of Classifications over the past five years. The Task Force has been instrumental to the adoption by all ASEAN member States of the ASEAN Common Industrial Classification (ACIC), which is based on the ISIC Revision 4. The Task Force is expected to complete the second phase of its work by December 2009. The objectives to be achieved before that date are ambitious:

- a. ensure that all ASEAN member States have implemented the ACIC and ISIC Revision 4;
- b. provide support to countries with less developed statistical systems to build their national version of the Industrial Classification, in accordance with the ACIC;
- c. construct correspondence tables, linking the newly revised national Industrial Classification with the ACIC, and with the former national Industrial Classification; and
- d. develop guidelines for comparison of statistics under different national versions of the Industrial Classification.

In this way, ASEAN countries are setting an international good practice for timely implementation of the ISIC Revision 4.

Dear colleagues,

As you know, a rapid implementation of ISIC Revision 4 is important since the structure of most economies has changed significantly since the adoption of Revision 3 in 1989. Its simultaneous implementation by all countries would add value by making collected data internationally comparable.

During the Thirty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission it was agreed that implementation of ISIC Rev 4 and CPC Version 2 would be best carried out in the

context of the implementation of the SNA 2. The Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications, at its April 2007 meeting, recommended that countries should adopt the ISIC Revision 4 by 2009 to suit their upcoming population census and that international reporting according to the ISIC Revision 4 should begin in 2012. This workshop will give us a better idea whether countries in this region can meet this target during the 2010 round of the population census.

Distinguished Participants,

The importance of a common standard classification of all economic activities in relation to economic and social statistics cannot be over-emphasized. Users expect the various domains of economic statistics to be coherent and consistent. They expect information on a particular segment of the economy to relate to the overall economy. They also expect economic data to be consistent across different data sources and over time. Using harmonized economic statistical concepts and standard classifications is one of the prerequisite for the integration of economic statistics.

In fact, the revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities and the Central Product Classification has proceeded hand in hand with the revision of all related major economic frameworks. The fourth generation of official guidelines on national accounting, the 2008 SNA, was adopted by UN Statistical Commission at its thirty-ninth session in February this year, along with the revised International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics (IRIS) and the International Recommendations for Distributive Trade Statistics (IRDTS). A revision of the fifth edition of the Balance of Payments Manual (BPM5) is in its final stages and will be submitted to the Commission at its fortieth session in 2009.

Distinguished Participants,

ESCAP is fully committed to support national statistical development in relation to the implementation of the new international standards and recommendations in economic statistics and national accounts. This scaled-up assistance will be carried out in full collaboration with UNSD, sub-regional, regional and other international organizations, and will involve advocacy for evidence-based policy making, compilation of good practices and guidelines, organization of expert group meetings and group training, and support for conducting establishment surveys.

An action plan for the development of economic statistics in the Asian and Pacific region will be discussed during the first session of the re-established Committee on Statistics, which will be held next month, from 15 to 17 December, here in the United Nations Conference Centre. In this action plan the Implementation of ISIC Revision 4 will be discussed in the context of implementation the 2008 SNA and other new international standards and recommendations in economic statistics.

The Committee on Statistics will serve as a unique intergovernmental forum for deliberations on statistical matters of key importance to the Asian and Pacific region. The inaugural session will determine the strategic direction and priorities of the Committee on Statistics, as well as how it could work effectively to advance the developmental needs of member States in Asia and the Pacific. Other topics on the provisional agenda include: the draft terms of reference and the functioning of the Committee on Statistics, Overview of Statistics development in Asia and the Pacific, Regional technical

cooperation in statistics, Measuring violence against women, Producing population estimates on an annual basis using vital registration statistics, and Measuring the progress of societies. More generally, we hope that the forum will facilitate the formation regional positions on key statistical issues of region-wide importance and influence decisions taken at the global level.

Dear Colleagues,

I am confident that the workshop will achieve the objectives I have outlined. I hope that your deliberations will result in concrete recommendations on how to ensure a coordinated implementation of ISIC Revision 4 in the context of a broader national and regional programme for enhancing the availability of good quality economic statistics. We look forward to your active participation in the discussion and encourage you to get the maximum benefit from the opportunity of being among peers and having access to classification experts to discuss the challenges that you might have to face when you go back to your own country.

Workshops like this are not only an invaluable opportunity to learn but also to expand your network of professional contacts.

I wish you an enjoyable and fruitful meeting!

Thank you very much for your attention.