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DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

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Agenda item 5: Programme Questions
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Programme Statement

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates and Colleagues,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present to you the work programme of the UN Statistics Division for the current year and the near future. Before doing so, I would like to make a few remarks, as usual, regarding the conduct of the 42nd session of the UN Statistical Commission.

Programme aspects related to the Statistical Commission

I am happy to report that a total of 132 countries represented by their national statistical offices and 41 international agencies participated in the 42nd session of the Commission and its many side events. I would like to put on record my appreciation to all national statistical offices and international agencies that have helped in the preparation of the various events. Special thanks go to the chairpersons and speakers at the Seminar on Innovative Statistical Frameworks, the High-Level Forum on Official Statistics, the Learning Events and other seminars during these 10 days. Special thanks should also go to the countries in the Western Asia region that have provided publicity material for the exhibition, which was an overwhelming success. I am also thankful for the facilitation provided by France, United Kingdom, Italy, Paris21, ECOWAS Secretariat, the World Bank, UNFPA and EFTA to some countries for their participation.

This Commission has considered 34 substantive papers, of which 13 were for discussion and 21 for information. The papers were posted on time in all languages. The feedback I received was that the Commission is satisfied with the current methods of work, the documentation of the papers, and the split between discussion and information papers. The secretariat will work with the Bureau to further review the methods of work and make appropriate changes if necessary.

Programme aspects related to the work of the United Nations Statistics Division

Let me now turn more specifically to the work programme of the UN Statistics Division (UNSD).

World Statistics Day

The observance of the World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010, as we heard from the interventions on Tuesday, has been a great success in many countries. UNSD is truly grateful to all the countries for your support in this event. The Commission has now decided that the World Statistics Day will be celebrated periodically with an interval sufficient for its preparation. UNSD will report back after consultation with the Bureau and will facilitate the implementation of this decision with appropriate preparations.

Improving our Data and Frameworks

In 2011 UNSD will continue its focus on working with countries on the compilation of basic statistics with the help of the Regional Commissions and international agencies. In 2010, we organized 39 workshops and 18 study visits events and serviced close to 2000 participants from more than 150 countries or territories. We provided funding for close to 500 participants from the developing countries.

Our programme on the 2010 round of the Population and Housing Censuses is functioning well. As of 1 Feb, 124 countries have already counted their population, about 57 % of the world's total. Another 77 countries will conduct their census this year, including India with an estimated 1.2 billion population. We will continue to offer our strongest support to the countries on the conduct of the census and the dissemination of the results. In this regard, I have recently sent a letter to all NSOs to inform you of our dissemination plans. In 2012, at the occasion of the 43rd session of the Statistical Commission, we intend to organize side events focusing on census, including a programme review paper on the World Programme on Population census.

In 2010, we were very busy in preparing the publication 'World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics' which was launched during the World Statistics Day. This publication was very well received and introduced in many countries. This year, we will begin a process on the development of social statistics, building on the conclusions of the Friday Seminar on statistical frameworks for social statistics. An Expert Group Meeting will be organized.

UNSD has recognized the importance of assisting countries to generate quick economic estimates to advise policy makers. Building on the three seminars we organized in the past two years on early warning indicators, we will continue our work on the methodology of generating high quality flash estimates of economic performance, their international comparability, and the communication strategy of such estimates. The seminar on 'Business Cycle Analytics' was very well received. We will do more work in this area.

We will continue to assist countries and regions in their implementation of SNA2008 and associated frameworks and classifications. In this regard, we will work closely with the Friends of the Chair to identify the barriers limiting SNA implementation. We will assist the FOC to complete the work on the integrated framework for economic statistics. We will also begin work on assessing how the global emphasis on green growth and carbon emission would impact our current statistical frameworks.

UNSD will continue to devote significant efforts to work on a framework of environmental statistics encompassing climate change statistics. In the same vein, we will also intensify our work on the environmental-economic accounting and bring the first volume to the Commission next year. With your help, we will inform the UN Conference on Sustainable development on our work in the environmental area.

Within the context of upgrading UN Comtrade, I sent you in May 2010 a request for detailed monthly trade statistics to be provided to UNSD on a regular basis. I am

pleased to report that many of you responded positively and that by now we have 76 countries sending us their monthly trade statistics, of which more than half from developing countries. We will continue this process and hope to release the monthly trade data on a trial basis through the UNdata portal very soon.

Many of your offices attended the Global Forum on Trade Statistics earlier this month in Geneva where issues on international trade and global production were discussed. Follow-up work is channeled through the Task Forces on merchandise trade and trade in services, and they will report on this to the Commission next year.

Enhancing data dissemination at country and global level

UNSD is committed to be the gateway to global statistical data. We are glad our statistical dissemination platform, UNdata, is well received and recognized. We are particularly glad that UNdata was recognized by the UN community and was awarded the 2010 UN21 Award for client services. This recognition will make us work even harder and we fully recognize the importance to help countries to make their statistical information more accessible to the users.

In this regard, our work to assist countries in all aspects of data dissemination will intensify, especially with respect to the MDGs and the population census data. We will work with all stakeholders on this effort, especially the UN Regional Commissions and other sub-regional entities. At the global level, we will continue to improve UNdata as a gateway to access statistical information contained in the UN system databases and as a link to all data services provided by countries. We will also work closely with the World Bank to develop jointly the Open Data platform to facilitate access to global data.

Strengthening our System

We have reviewed the Fundamental Principles on Official Statistics this week and the Commission has decided to form a group to move the process of implementation

forward. UNSD will assist this process. We will also continue to work on the Inventory of Statistical Standards and the National Quality Assurance Framework.

Geospatial Initiative

We are intensifying our work on the Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM) Initiative. A paper has been prepared for ECOSOC this year seeking to establish a committee of experts on GGIM, and a High-Level Forum will be organized in October this year in the Republic of Korea. We will help the global statistical system to work closely with the geospatial information community so that the two streams of information could be fully integrated in the future.

Development indicators

The Statistical Commission is facing increasing demands in the various global policy areas to support the development of indicators. Our Commission is already working on “Indicators on Violence against Women”. Furthermore, we have been asked to review proposals for the development of “Youth Indicators”. In this respect, we will need your support and willingness to participate in possible expert group meetings. Looking forward, we can expect that in the coming years, especially as we approach the 2015 MDG deadline, there will be an extended debate on the development indicators and their monitoring. It is absolutely indispensable that the professional statistical community be fully involved in this discussion early on, in order to ensure the feasibility and solidity of any proposed indicator framework.

UNSD work programme 2012/13

As you may know, the United Nations functions in a two-year budgetary cycle. Currently, the budget and work programme for the years 2012 and 2013 is being finalized for adoption by the General Assembly at the end of this year 2011. You'll find the specific work programme for the Statistics Division in document E/CN.3/2011/CRP.2.

The objectives, the expected accomplishments and the indicators of achievement had already been reviewed by the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session and were subsequently approved by the General Assembly. The new information contained in document E/CN.3/2011/CRP.2 refers to the detailed list of outputs. According to UN budget and programme procedures, and due to the fact that the budget approval process is now fairly advanced, this document is presented to the Commission for information. I, therefore, invite the Commission to take note of the Division's 2012/13 work programme. Any comments you may have are welcome and will certainly assist me in the future management of the Division.

Update on the implementation of the current work programme 2010/11:

I am pleased to report that the implementation of the 2010/11 programme is progressing smoothly and that virtually all planned outputs will be produced in time. Nonetheless, due to changing priorities some adjustments will have to be made to our list of over 400 programmed outputs. Some proposed output terminations and additions are contained in the Annex of E/CN.3/2011/CRP.2. I invite the Commission to approve these adjustments in our current work programme and authorize the Commission's Bureau to approve further adjustments, should they become necessary in the course of this year.