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**MR. STEFAN SCHWEINFEST
DIRECTOR
UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

Celebrating the 23rd National Statistics Day in the Republic of Korea

Seoul, 1 September 2017

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests and colleagues from Statistics Korea,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you today from the United Nations Headquarters in New York, and to congratulate you on this special occasion of the 23rd National Statistics Day in the Republic of Korea. I wish to put on record my gratitude to Commissioner Hwang Soo Kyeong for providing me with this opportunity.

On this day of celebration, I would like to use this short greeting address to share with you two simple messages: (i) I am grateful for the close cooperation between my office, the United Nations Statistics Division and government agencies in Korea in the past and (ii) I look forward to working with you on the challenges of the future.

The Republic of Korea is currently a member of the United Nations Statistical Commission for the period of 2016-2019 and even acted as its Vice-Chair over the past 2 years. As there are only 24 elected members of the Statistical Commission worldwide (and only four from Asia), this implies that the Republic of Korea has accepted a special responsibility for shaping the Global Statistical System. Especially, indicator experts from Statistics Korea have contributed to development of the global indicator framework for the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

I would also like to mention, on this occasion, that I have very fond memories of my last visit to Seoul and the wonderful Korean hospitality I have experienced then. This was in October 2011, when the Korean National Geographic Information Institute hosted the first ever United Nations High level forum on Global Geospatial Information Management. The integration of statistical and geo-spatial information is critical for developing strong national information systems and I am confident that Korea is continuing its early leadership role in this area.

Looking forward, there are many challenges for us statisticians, due to the comprehensive and ambitious national and global development agendas, which need to be supported by solid and integrated information systems. We, the professional statistical community, will have to continuously transform and modernize our statistical systems in order to satisfy these new demands. The first United Nations World Data Forum concluded in January this year with the launch of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for better data to improve people's lives. Guided by this Global Action plan, we will continue to build strong National Statistical Systems under the leadership of the National Statistical Offices. This can only be successful if the statistical community has strong support and full political backing from the highest national authorities. I am confident, that through the endorsement of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics by the most important political body of the United Nations, the General Assembly in 2014, governments around the world have officially put on record their commitment to supporting national statistical systems.

Distinguished guests,

Before coming to the end, I want to use this opportunity to thank Statistics Korea for co-organizing and hosting the International Seminar on Open Data for the Sustainable Development Goals, which will be held in Seoul from 25-27 September 2017. This Seminar will review and recommend best practices for making data more open and accessible to everyone. It shows the continued dedication of Statistics Korea to the global statistical system and your willingness to step up to the challenges we all face.

Let me conclude by congratulating you once again and thanking you very much for your attention.
