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"DATA MATTERS FESTIVAL" organized by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
Ramallah, Palestine, 20 October 2019

Remarks by
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Dear colleagues, friends and festival participants,

It is a great pleasure for me to join you virtually today, to kick off the annual celebration of the “Data Matters Festival”. I congratulate my colleagues in the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for this innovative idea and initiative. A Data Matters Festival. To celebrate the important role of data in improving lives. To bring together communities who care about good data.

Statistics and Data are more important than ever before.

We need robust statistics and data to make informed evidence based decisions to improve the lives of people around the world. Without statistics and data, we are flying blind towards our destination of the sustainable development goals. An ambitious response is needed to unleash the full power of the social and economic transformation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – and data are at the core of this.

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has been leading the way, not only in the region, but on a global scale. PCBS is actively engaged in important international strategic discussions such as the United Nations Statistical Commission’s High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building. PCBS is working with my office, the United Nations Statistics Division, on cutting edge projects such as the Federated System for the Sustainable Development Goals creating visually enhanced and easily accessible data bases for SDG monitoring. The PCBS is an excellent example how a strong National Statistical Office can bring together and validate the best data available in a country. In order to do so we have to be modern and bold and integrate new data sources (such as big data and geospatial data) and use modern information technology. This is why it is so important to have occasions like this one, where

statisticians, data scientists, private sector representatives, advocates and data users can meet and start working together.

In November 2017, I had the honor of being a guest of PCBS here in Ramallah. I was lucky enough to discover a beautiful land, rich in culture, but also rich in challenges, given the conflict environment. But especially in difficult environments, solid data are critically important to take decisions that will affect peoples' lives immediately. This is why this Festival is so important.

I wish you fruitful discussions, much success and an enjoyable celebration..... of good data!