



**Conference on Climate Change
and Official Statistics
Oslo, Norway, 14-16 April 2008**

Opening speech

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Madam Minister,
Mister Olsen,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the United Nations, to the Conference on Climate Change and Official Statistics. Let me first express my gratitude to the Government of Norway and, in particular, to Statistics Norway for hosting this important event. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our partners Eurostat and the World Bank for their collaboration in jointly organizing and sponsoring this event.

Climate change is high on the political agenda; and we, the professional community of official statisticians have to - and indeed, desire to - respond to this policy challenge, both at the national as well as at the global level. This is why we have convened this Conference. It brings together for the first time producers and users of climate change related information: official statisticians, analysts and policy makers. We want to launch here an important dialogue among these groups to start forging a consensus on a statistical framework on climate change, which will assist countries to meet their information needs to support their national policies on climate change. I think we should be ambitious in this exercise: not only do we want to have a thorough



discussion of the issues here; but more importantly, we want to leave this conference with an ‘action plan’ that contains clear steps and commitments towards developing and implementing this statistical framework in the countries and at the global level.

We start this conference with many questions:

- What exactly is it that we are trying to measure?
- What are the data and the statistical tools that are already available?
- What are the new statistical challenges?
- What are the next steps to address these challenges?

Let me at the beginning of this conference share with you some of my thoughts regarding these questions.

The Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that climate change is a reality, and that there is now a global understanding that rising greenhouse gas emissions have negative effects on our well being, threatening particularly the poor of the world. The high-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 24 September 2007 reaffirmed the UN system as the appropriate multilateral framework through which the necessary future climate change regime can be established.

The Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali last December to step up international efforts to combat climate change and lay down measures and obligations for the world after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires at the end of 2012. They decided on both the timeline and the main elements of a stronger climate change deal, including a shared long-term vision and enhanced action on the four building blocks: mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and financing.



The main challenge is to integrate climate change and development action into a common framework, and to develop and implement effectively integrated social, economic and environmental policies on mitigating and adapting to climate change. We need to understand the linkages between climate change and our future social, economic and environmental well being, and indeed our sustainable development.

This is where the global statistical community comes in. The challenge is to support the understanding of the complex interrelationships with the necessary high quality and timely statistics and the appropriate tools for statistical analysis. I believe that the global statistical community and official statistics have to play a strong role in the measurement and monitoring of the driving forces, pressures, impacts and responses related to climate change. It is our obligation to review our existing tools, identify gaps and the needs for improvement, adjustment, or to develop new tools, to better satisfy the requirements of informed policy and decision making.

We have already done quite a bit of work. There is a wealth of information compiled by official statisticians on the population, the economy and the environment. These statistics provide the input to the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions, to the development of scenarios and modeling, the assessment of impacts, vulnerability, adaptive and mitigation capacity. We will review in the different sessions of this conference whether our sectoral statistics are capable to respond to the following specific challenges.

First of all, the Fifth assessment report of the IPCC will need to rely on increasingly sophisticated scenario building and modeling, drawing, for its inputs, on statistics provided by national statistical offices and other sources on such fields as population, economic growth and income, energy structure and other driving forces in climate change.

Another challenge is defining the role of national statistical offices in the estimation of greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that the statistics that they collect can be made



readily available to the policy-makers who formulate and implement national strategies for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

We will also need to focus on the measurement and assessment of the costs and benefits of policies, measures and instruments for adaptation and mitigation, and the weighing of tradeoffs between alternative courses of action. Monitoring the effectiveness and impacts of these courses of action is also essential.

Carbon markets present another new challenge for official statistics. National statistical offices need to examine the implications of carbon trading for the economy and economic growth with a view to better measuring indicators such as the carbon intensity of production. For the exchange of carbon credits to work efficiently, accurate statistics on the physical phenomena are needed, along with data on the economic and social impacts of emissions pricing.

Finally, to comprehensively address climate change, and its impacts, the world needs integrated data. This is a challenge providers of official statistics need to meet, or they risk losing relevance. We do have frameworks for the analysis of data from different sources and for bringing environmental, economic and social data together, such as the System of Environmental and Economic Accounting. These frameworks facilitate the analysis of the impacts of climate change on the economy, society and the environment as well as the impacts of mitigation or adaptive responses. We also use indicators frameworks and Geographic Information Systems, which are useful tools for the integration of social- demographic and environmental data. We will review the potential of these frameworks and their usefulness and value added in climate change analysis, policy and decision making.

Let us work together in these three days on this important agenda for action for official statisticians: to develop a coherent, integrated data gathering and analysis framework to help policy and decision makers to better respond to climate change. This agenda, after further consultation, will be submitted to the 40th session of the UN Statistical



Commission session in February 2009, where we can discuss and take decisions on our role and future work on climate change statistics.

Thank you again for coming here and being part of this important event.