

Welcoming Address

Prepared by

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, Particularly, those representing international organizations and your respective governments,

I would like to begin by extending my warm welcome and appreciation to everyone for coming all the way to Incheon, Korea to attend the International Seminar on Gender Statistics. Statistics Korea has organized this seminar in collaboration with the UNSD to provide a forum for discussion on the issues and future strategies regarding gender statistics. It has been a great honor for us to work with the UNSD, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the USND for their hard work and valuable contribution in preparing for this seminar.

< Significant of International Seminar on Gender Statistics >

At the 42nd UNSC in 2011, the strategic role* of the UNSD and IAEG on development of gender statistics was highlighted. In an extension to that, at the 44th UNSC in February of this year, discussions** were tabled on a need for more wide-ranging efforts to promote production of gender statistics among UN member countries for systematic implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, review of MDGs and more. In connection to this, this international seminar on gender statistics is highly significant as we are taking a step forward toward the advancement of gender statistics.

* UNSC called for the development of a manual and guidelines on production and use of gender statistics, establishment of basic gender indicators and evaluation of gender statistics programmes.

** Since 2007, The UN has been undertaking Global Gender Statistics Programme for the advancement of gender statistics among UN member countries including the Global Forum on Gender Statistics.

Over the years, gender statistics have been a key topic of interest of the UN. This seminar aims to bring the NSOs and women's policy offices from different countries together in order to identify the social phenomena and issues related to gender inequality and jointly to find the solutions, by means of acknowledging the need for an accurate measurement of gender equality, developing future strategies and setting grounds for continuous monitoring in these areas.

In addition to the measurement of gender equality and developing future strategies, we will be covering critically important issues in this international seminar including career discontinuity of women, work/family life balance and lives of women depicted from time use and tools for measuring structural problems related to women at risk of social vulnerability.

< Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women >

You may recall the UN Millennium Summit, when the leaders from 189 nations came together to adopt the Millennium Declaration on sustainable development, the 'gender equality and women's empowerment' was selected as a part of the MDGs. These initiatives accompany more specific goals of which the first one entails eliminating gender inequality in elementary and secondary education. The second entails economic equality which particularly concerns employment. The third entails realizing equality in the political participation process.

In the latest UN MDG report, gender equality in elementary education is close to reaching its goal, but only 2 out of 130 countries have actually achieved gender equality. Worldwide, only 40 out 100 paid jobs in non-agricultural sectors are occupied by women, and only 20% of national assemblies worldwide are seated by women as of January 2103.

These figures tell us that gender equality in education continues to improve towards our goal, but in many other regions, significant improvement is needed. In most regions and sectors, women's labor participation is increasing, but in most developing countries, women experience more difficulty in finding employment than men and are not receiving the same social benefits. The quota system in national assemblies has helped increase the influence of women in politics but still there is much room for improvement in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.

In this context, I must once again emphasize the importance of gender statistics. Countries must pay more attention to gender statistics which is a must for establishing and implementing gender policies. The society which gives an equal amount of rights and responsibilities to women and men, allowing women and men to make equal contributions to social development does not happen spontaneously; we must increase our efforts to the expansion, production and dissemination of gender statistics.

< Gender Statistics in Korea >

Distinguished Guests,

Gender statistics in Korea is currently undergoing a major turning point and embracing an opportunity for advancement. Our Ministry of Gender Equality has been dealing with exploding demand for gender statistics as gender influence evaluation programmes are reaching maturity. The ministry is now producing statistics on some key gender issues including family and sexual violence. As for Statistics Korea, we are expanding our work on gender statistics through the drafting of mid- and long-term statistical advancement plans and a revision of the Statistics Act.

In Korea, to give you an example, the labor participation rate of women in Korea on a graph is distinguished by a rapid fall among women in their 20s and 30s followed by a rise in older age groups. This M-curve represents the working age of women in Korean society, as women in their 20s and 30s tend to give up social activities to stay at home for their childrearing responsibilities.

In response to such social trends, we have begun developing statistics to support public policies on work/family life balance. In detail, we have broken down policy on work/family life balance into more specific subjects such as childcare, vacation, working hours, women's labor force and family-friendly policies. From these, we will be devising a system from which statistics can be identified and enhanced in real time according to demand. These steps will allow us to closely link statistical demand surveys, statistical production and quality management and set grounds establishing, implementing and evaluating effective gender policies.

<Challenges Ahead>

Gender statistics have allowed us to assess social trends and issues and provide solutions related to gender inequality by gauging accurate and full differences and similarities of gender status. The production and dissemination of gender statistics are the most fundamental prerequisites to gender mainstreaming of national policies.

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 calls for production and dissemination of all statistics broken down by gender at the individual level and proposes development of new statistics from a gender equality perspective to more accurately show women's activities and statuses.

The need for gender statistics has been acknowledged internationally; however, detailed data collection on gender has been limited at the regional level. Thus, strengthening of international cooperation in this area can help support our efforts to effectively achieve our objectives related to gender statistics.

Now is the time to discover how we can move forward with the production and dissemination of gender statistics, how to make use of these statistics to support policies and what roles the international community should play in these initiatives.

< Closing >

Statistics Korea is committed to strengthening our ongoing statistical cooperation with the UN, in carrying out our responsibilities in the international community.

It is my sincere hope that this week's seminar will prove to be productive by contributing to the advancement of statistics from a gender perspective in many ways. At the same time, I hope you will all have a pleasant time during your stay in Korea.

Thank you.