

**International Seminar on Information and Communication Technology Statistics
Seoul, Republic of Korea, 19-21 July 2010**

Opening remarks

**Susan Teltscher, Head, Market Information and Statistics Division
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Mr Paul Cheung, Director, United Nations Statistics Division

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Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of ITU, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this international seminar on information and communication technology statistics and I would like to thank the Korean Government, in particular KOSTAT, for hosting this important event.

Last month, ITU concluded its World Telecommunication Development Conference which took place in Hyderabad, India. The event brought together the main ICT players from all over the world and set our priorities in terms of ICT development for the four years to come. It was remarkable to note from the discussions just how entrenched ICTs have become in every aspect of our lives and how the majority of countries have recognized that access to ICTs is at the core of social and economic development.

ICTs are a catalyst for growth and that is why ITU and UNESCO have recently launched a global high-level Broadband Commission for Digital Development which aims to promote the adoption of broadband-friendly practice and policies so that the entire world can take advantage of the benefits broadband can offer. Let me quote Dr Hamadoun Toure, the Secretary General of ITU, at the occasion of the first meeting of the Broadband Commission one week ago at ITU headquarters in Geneva: "In the 21st century, affordable, ubiquitous broadband networks will be as critical to social and economic prosperity as networks like transport, water and power. Not only does broadband deliver benefits across every sector of society, but it also helps promote social and economic development, and will be key in helping us get the Millennium Development Goals back on track."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to achieve such a goal and take effective ICT policy decisions, it is essential to count on reliable information on access to ICTs, on how ICTs are used by citizens, governments and businesses, and on the impact ICTs have on social and economic development.

I am therefore extremely pleased to see the topic of information society measurement being debated at this seminar, which is the fruit of a joint effort of several international agencies working closely together to improve ICT statistics worldwide. The collaboration between ITU and UNCTAD goes back many years and both agencies are founding members of the global Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development, which is also a partner in our event here in Seoul and several Partnership members are here with us and ready to share their knowledge and experience.

I am particularly pleased that we are co-organizing this event with the UN Statistics Division under the leadership of Mr Paul Cheung. This speaks directly to the main objectives of the Partnership – namely to mainstream ICT statistics in the global statistical agenda, to develop internationally agreed standards and to ensure international comparability of ICT statistics. To achieve this, we need to coordinate our activities closely with UNSD, with the UN Statistical Commission, and with the broader UN statistical system.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Because of the close link between information society policy and measurement, ITU gives a high priority to both subjects. For example, our data have illustrated the continuous growth in the demand for ICT services despite the latest economic downturn – we are estimating that today there are 5 billion mobile subscriptions globally. We need to understand better how new technologies are used and how they help address pressing existing and future international policy needs and concerns.

A joint effort is also needed to track progress towards internationally agreed development goals, such as the MDGs or the targets agreed upon at the World Summit on the Information Society. ITU plays an active role in monitoring these targets. Earlier this year, we have launched our World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report 2010, which provides a mid-term review of the WSIS targets based on measurable indicators. You will hear more about the findings of this report later on.

Our host of this seminar, the Republic of Korea, is a leader when it comes to information and communication technology infrastructure and uptake. Korea is among the top countries worldwide in terms of fixed and mobile broadband penetration. Almost all households in Korea are connected to the Internet and Korea is also spearheading several key broadband applications. At the same time, Korea has been tracking progress in its information society developments continuously, which has helped policy makers take informed decisions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the past few years, a lot of progress has been made when it comes to ICT measurement. The amount and quality of available information on ICT development has improved significantly, including in many developing countries. But there is still much left to be done and this is why we are here.

The main objective of this seminar is to bring together data producers and experts from all regions, to review progress that has been made on ICT statistics, to identify new trends and developments, to discuss definitions of indicators and, above all, to share the experiences that you have made in the collection of ICT statistics. We will also look at emerging topics such as measuring e-government, online security and issues related to green ICTs. And we will spend some time on debating how the availability and quality of the data can be improved.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by reaffirming ITU's commitment to contribute to the development and enhancement of comparable indicators on the information society, and to work closely with our member States to this effect.

I wish all of us an excellent debate and I look forward to the outcomes of this important meeting.

Thank you.