

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

**Opening Remarks
Torbjörn Fredriksson, UNCTAD**

Madame Commissioner, Mr Cheung, experts, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (or UNCTAD), it is a great honour and pleasure for me to take part in the Opening Ceremony of this important event on ICT Statistics. This seminar offers a timely opportunity for us to discuss new developments, trends and challenges related to ICT statistics.

The venue is highly appropriate. Seoul is an excellent choice for a seminar on ICT statistics. Many countries around the world look to the Republic of Korea to learn – not least with regard to the way in which the country has managed to foster one of the world's most competitive ICT industries. There are few other countries in which the ICT sector plays a more prominent role in the economy, and the Republic of Korea is now the fifth largest exporter of ICT goods in the world.

ICT statistics are a challenging area for various reasons. First, it is relatively new to many providers of statistics – hence the need to develop new indicators and definitions. Secondly, it is an area in constant flux. This increases the need for continuous improvement and adaptation of what to measure and how to measure it. I hope that this seminar will provide ample opportunity to discuss, for example, the need for new indicators or for changes in existing ones. I also hope that we will learn from each other by way of experience sharing. This is important, not least to assist those countries that are still at an early stage in the production of ICT data.

In great part thanks to the work of the multi-agency Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development – which was launched during the UNCTAD XI Conference in 2004 in Sao Paulo – there has been considerable progress in the production of ICT statistics. This is a welcome development. Governments need relevant, up-to-date and internationally comparable information in order to design, implement and evaluate their policies.

At the same time, there is no room for complacency. Many data gaps still remain in the ICT area. This is particularly striking in the case of low-income countries. Take the example of measuring the extent to which enterprises use ICTs. Until now, only one least developed country has been included in UNCTAD's Information Economy Database. The paucity of data for low-income countries is yet another illustration of the digital divide. It underlines the need for further capacity-building in this area.

UNCTAD is actively assisting developing countries in this context. Based on the UNCTAD Manual for the Production of Statistics on the Information Economy, we have developed targeted training courses to support national statistical offices in this area. We often provide technical assistance in collaboration with other members of the Partnership, such as ITU and the regional commissions of the UN. We hope to be able to scale up our capacity-building efforts in the next few years to ensure that as many countries as possible by 2015 can report data on the Information Economy.

Finally, let me on behalf of UNCTAD thank the Government of the Republic of Korea for hosting this important seminar. I would also like to thank our co-organizers – the UN Statistical Division and ITU – as well as all the members of the Partnership for excellent collaboration in the preparatory process. It is now up to all of us to make the most of the three coming days to advance our common interest in measuring ICT for development. I encourage all speakers and participants to take active part in the discussions.

Thank you for your attention.