

**International Seminar on Information and Communication Technology  
Statistics  
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**Opening Statement**

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Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to this International Seminar on Information and Communication Technology Statistics. Let me first express my gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea and, in particular to the office of Statistics Korea, for hosting this seminar and providing a forum where distinguished experts from statistical agencies, ICT Ministries, telecommunication authorities can share views and discuss new developments, trends and challenges related to ICT statistics. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the other co-organizers of the seminar - the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which promote tirelessly the measurement of the information society and the information economy at the international level.

The last twenty years have seen a transformation of all aspects of our society. The production and business sphere, the social sphere and even our personal lives have been dramatically transformed by the introduction of ever changing information and communication technologies. This has changed the way production processes are organized, the way we interact with each other and the way we organize our personal lives.

As statisticians it is our duty to turn these changes in quantified statements, to measure progress and allow others to use the statistical information to make informed decisions. Consequently, statistics on information and communication technologies have received increasing attention in recent years, highlighting the need for reliable data on new technologies that have impacted all aspects of economic and social life. Especially since the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, there has been much progress on the production of ICT statistics.

At the same time, the ICT area continues to evolve rapidly and statistical standards and definitions need to be revised and adapted continuously. This demonstrates itself in the change of ICT equipment, the type of ICT services provided and also the changing quality of ICT services or ICT access criteria. While many of us here are still cherishing the Blackberry that made us a high-tech worker, efficient and connected to the world, and made us part of the leading users of technology, the same equipment and connection power elicits barely a smile from our children. ICT capacity (in all its meanings) has improved dramatically and so has ICT's impact on our society.

Producing statistics on information and communication technologies under such circumstances is a very challenging task. National statistical agencies, as the main data collectors, are crucial players in ensuring sustainable and internationally comparable ICT statistics. ICT statistics become an important component of their work programmes as more countries seek to design, monitor and review national policies and strategies to take advantage of the rapid advances in information technology. In addition, business communities require information about access to, and use of, ICTs by various consumer groups, as well as information about the impact of ICTs. This is a particular challenge for the developing countries, many of which are just starting their statistical work on measuring the information society. At the international level, comparable ICT indicators are critical to cross-country comparisons of ICT development, to

monitoring the global digital divide and to establishing policy-relevant benchmarks. The establishment of standard concepts for the measuring of ICTs, the continuous monitoring of their relevance and the development of reliable methodologies have become the crucial prerequisites for the successful production of relevant ICT statistics. The review of the application of these standards, the statistical methods applied and the expansion to new areas of ICT involvement are key elements of this seminar.

The United Nations Statistical Commission as the apex entity of the global statistical system has been actively involved in the issues to be addressed by this seminar. At its 38<sup>th</sup> session in March 2007, the Commission endorsed the Core list of ICT indicators for the production of internationally comparable statistics as developed by the *Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development*. The Commission encouraged countries to use that list in their data collection programmes and at its subsequent sessions considered two manuals prepared to guide statisticians from developing countries in all steps of production and dissemination of ICT statistics. An extensive consultation process had been established through which national and international experts provided detailed feedback and suggestions to make the manuals as practical a tool as possible for staff of national statistical organizations and other agencies responsible for measuring the information society and information economy.

At the United Nations Statistics Division we are firmly committed to collaborate effectively with members of the *Partnership* to bring this programme forward as part of our common efforts towards enhancing the availability of internationally comparable indicators of the information society and economy.

I look forward to the deliberations of this meeting and trust that the seminar will bring innovative and practical ideas to further improve harmonization in measuring information society and economy. In this spirit I wish you productive work, inspiring discussions and a pleasant stay in Seoul.