

Opening Statement

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Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to this third global forum on gender statistics. This is an important year for the statistical community. In just a few days, we will celebrate the first ever World Statistics Day—an opportunity for our statistical family to celebrate the many achievements of official statistics and the important contribution statisticians around the world make to their societies by providing a great wealth of reliable, good quality data that inform policies, promote change and monitor progress on many fronts.

Statistics are crucial to economic and social development. They generate public debate and promote progress of society. They are indispensable to academic research and private sector development. They form the basis for media information. Statistics ultimately serve everybody in society.

But there cannot be a strong statistical system without a full integration of a gender perspective in the production, analysis and dissemination of data. Gender equality and women's empowerment continue to be a global policy concern. In order to support policy changes that would ensure gender equality, all our statistical information should fully reflect gender-based differences and address issues related to women and men's roles in society. Furthermore, specific instruments, such as indicators to measure violence against women or time use surveys need to be developed or strengthened. There has been tremendous progress in this area, but we still have many gaps to fill.

This year is also an important year as many countries are undertaking their population censuses as part of the 2010 World Population Census Programme. As of September 1 of this year, 103 countries had conducted a census in the 2010 round and 120 had scheduled one. 3 billion people will have been counted in 2010 alone. And population censuses represent an opportunity to mainstream gender in national statistical systems and can tremendously improve the availability of gender statistics in countries.

The focus of our discussion this year is health statistics. Women and men's health differ in significant ways, including how they are exposed to diseases, how they react to diseases, how they are treated and what the outcomes are. Women and men's contribution to the care of the sick and the elderly are also significantly different. Yet, all these aspects are often poorly reflected in official statistics.

Many countries lack a complete system of civil registration to produce the necessary vital statistics. And in some of these countries, demographic and health surveys are not as frequent as needed to produce all the relevant health indicators. Much work is being done in this area. National

governments have increasingly recognized the importance of building complete and effective civil registration systems as one of the key sources of data for vital statistics, including data by sex. The UN Statistics Division, in collaboration with partner agencies is committed to respond to the increasing demand from countries for cooperation activities in the development of civil registration systems—including training and technical assistance. Household survey programmes have been strengthened around the world, including through increasing coverage and frequency of internationally sponsored surveys such as DHS and MICS. These improvements have resulted in an increased availability of data to monitor health indicators.

Improving maternal health and reducing maternal deaths is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals, also recognized as crucial to the achievement of many of the other goals. But many of the poorest countries in the world—and many of those where maternal mortality is highest—do not have the tools and resources to count their maternal deaths and regularly measure the key indicators of reproductive health. Measuring maternal mortality, in particular, remains a great challenge. But there has been some progress. Data collection on reproductive health indicators has improved over the years and the increasing available evidence on maternal mortality and morbidity has contributed to the acceleration in intervention coverage and reduction in maternal deaths.

Women with disabilities are often victims of double discrimination, as women and as persons with disabilities. Gathering the necessary evidence and providing policy makers with disability statistics that fully reflect gender-based differences is key for addressing discrimination and implementing the right interventions. In November 2009, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on “Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities” that calls on Governments to build a knowledge base of data and information about the situation of persons with disabilities. Our Division, in collaboration with the Inter-agency and Expert Group on MDG Indicators, has just recently established a Task Team on MDGs and Persons with Disabilities to explore ways to monitor progress towards the MDGs among persons with disabilities, including for Goal 3 on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment. These recent developments will certainly help promote the production and use of gender sensitive data on persons with disabilities.

Finally, I would like to stress how important it is to ensure that the statistics we produce are made accessible and are disseminated as widely as possible. Next week, we will launch *The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics*. As many of you know, this a compilation of the latest data documenting progress for women worldwide in eight key areas: population and families, health,

education, work, power and decision-making, violence against women, environment and poverty. The World's Women is an example of how gender statistics can be made available to the public and policy-makers and how these data can help advance gender equality worldwide.

The 2010 UN MDG Summit has made it clear that improving statistical capacity is vital for global progress. We, at the United Nations Statistics Division are honoured to serve the global statistical community and remain committed to foster the development of gender statistics, promote collaboration among both national and international statistical agencies to make our work more effective, to facilitate international agreements on the necessary standards and guidelines for gender statistics, and to assist national statistical systems to fully integrate a gender perspective in their work.

I wish you a successful meeting.