



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**International Workshop on Economic Census
National Bureau of Statistics of China
Beijing, 26-29 July 2005**

Opening Statement

Paul Cheung, Director
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Mr Li Deshe, Commissioner,
Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to add my welcome to all of you to the International Workshop on Economic Census. The workshop is jointly organized by the United Nations Statistics Division and National Bureau of Statistics of China. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the NBS for hosting this event and to its staff involved in preparation of this event. For UNSD, we are happy to join the NBS to take advantage of the success of the first national economic census in China and to use it as a starting point in the exchange of country experiences. NBS has kindly agreed to make several presentations to share with all of us its approach and lessons learned.

The goal of establishing of a uniform pattern for the measurement of economic activities on a comparable basis was on the agenda of the United Nations Statistical Commission since its inception. Over the years, recommendations for collection of statistics on a number of economic activities such as industrial, construction, distributive trade and other services were developed and adopted. The latest recommendations, however, were issued more than two decades ago - in mid 1970 and 1980.

Since then, significant developments have taken place making it imperative to revise the international recommendations in this area. These include changes in the ways economic activity is conducted by businesses, use of the new compilation methods by national statistical offices and adoption of the new methodological guidelines such as activity and product classifications and guidelines for national accounting. UNSD is making a special effort to take stock of all these developments and to strengthen methodological and operational foundations of basic economic statistics. In this context, further improvements in the organization and effective conduct of economic censuses are of great importance. This workshop is the first step in the new round of consultations with the country and international experts on the relevant issues.

The workshop is envisaged as a forum to discuss the methodology and related technical issues of economic census and to exchange relevant experiences in alternative approaches. The overarching goal is to evaluate the potential of economic census in the context of efforts to compile high quality and policy relevant economic statistics. It is expected that the recommendations of the workshop will be integrated in the UNSD strategy paper on compilation of basic economic statistics planned for submission to the 37th Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2006.

We begin our work in this workshop with an in-depth review of the NBS experience in conducting the economic census in China and will continue with exchange of country experiences in several key areas highly important to economic census such as constructing and maintaining of a business register; coverage and content of economic census; data collection and processing. We will then go into in a complex subject of building an integrated economic statistics programme and finish the workshop with deliberations on the future directions of economic census. I admit that the agenda is quite ambitious. We may not be able to cover all relevant issues with all the required attention; but, in my view, it is important to review most of them in order to see more clearly the big picture and to charter the future course of actions.

To achieve the objectives of the workshop and to ensure that agenda items are taken up effectively, we invited countries from different regions with different experience, circumstances and needs. All of you have traveled a long distance to attend this workshop. I am grateful for your support and your interest in this workshop. I am sure you will find the presentations and discussions of great interest.

Finally, I hope you will be able to find time to enjoy this beautiful and vibrant city of Beijing.

Thank you.