



5th Global Forum on Gender Statistics

Aguascalientes, Mexico

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Opening Remarks

Stefan Schweinfest, Director
United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)

Muy estimado colega Dr. Eduardo Sojo, Presidente del INEGI

Distinguidos participantes del Quinto Foro Global de Estadísticas de Género

Aquellos que me conocen personalmente saben que normalmente nunca me perdería una buena oportunidad para ver a mis muy estimados y queridos colegas del INEGI/México. Lamentablemente, hoy, no puedo estar con Ustedes en esta hermosa ciudad de Aguascalientes. En esta ocasión, el castigado soy yo – ya que me estoy perdiendo la famosa hospitalidad Mexicana y la organización, sin duda impecable, de este importante evento. Sin embargo, he querido preparar y enviarles unas palabras de apertura, y por el carácter internacional de este foro, me perdonarán, si lo hago en inglés – así no tendrán que sufrir por mi acento mexicano-alemán.

I'm very grateful for this opportunity to address such a group of experts on gender issues and gender statistics. I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Mexico and in particular to our friends and colleagues in the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía under the leadership of Dr. Eduardo Sojo, for kindly hosting this event and for their financial contribution and expert participation in the Forum.

I will structure my opening remarks in four segments: First describing briefly the policy context; second reflecting on the current status of gender statistics; third giving you some updates on the activities of my office – the UN Statistics Division – in this area and forth and finally giving you some preview of how the discussions of the Forum will be organised.

Let me start by highlighting that progress towards achieving gender equality is mixed. Whilst much progress has been made in some fields, there remain areas of concern: According to the latest UNSD global assessment gender disparities are now more prevalent at higher levels of education. Women's representation in positions of power and decision-making continues to

increase in most countries but is still far from parity. Women's status in the labour market has improved, but gender disparity persists in wages, occupations and access to social protection. Women remain the primary caretakers of the family, which calls for family-friendly policies to support greater women's participation in the labour market.

Women's ability to be economically independent continues to be restricted not only by low access to own income but also gender bias in property rights and access to financial services. The gender gap in poverty has narrowed in some countries but persists in others; and lone mothers with children and older women remain particularly vulnerable to poverty.

Violence against women continues to affect women in all regions of the world, with an estimated 35 per cent of all women experiencing physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

On a positive side, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment continues to be at the forefront of global policy concerns, as recently reaffirmed by the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on "*achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls*" in the outcome document of the Open Working Group (OWG) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in New York in July 2014.

We anticipate that this will translate into an increased demand for gender statistics that are regularly produced and provide solid and objective evidence. So let me turn to the topic of data and statistics now.

We are also fully aware of the existence of many data gaps for national and international monitoring particularly in less traditional areas of official statistics. Countries are facing many challenges in mainstreaming the gender dimension into data production, analysis and dissemination. For instance, time use data and statistics on time spent on domestic chores and caring are available in around a third of countries of the world. An even smaller proportion of

countries “value” this unpaid work through satellite accounts for household production. As another example, only half of countries produce statistics on violence against women. Yet this extreme form of discrimination affects women everywhere in the world. Existing country-level data are not yet fully comparable, but we expect great improvements after the recent adoption of agreed international statistical methods on measuring violence against women.

Additional efforts are also needed to develop new methods to measure important areas of gender equality and women’s empowerment like *poverty* from a gender perspective and the unequal intra-household distribution of power and resources. Finally, a significant challenge relates to the need to address gender equality and women’s rights for different demographic and social groups. Life-cycle analyses of gender equality suggest that women and girls face different constraints that can be age-specific or may be specific to different socio-economic groups. Disaggregated statistics along these lines should be promoted as well as a renewed effort to fully analyse existing survey data, and to explore other data sources, including administrative records.

Work programme of UNSD in the area of gender statistics

Dear colleagues,

It is in this context that I am happy to restate UNSD firm commitment to bring gender statistics programmes forward and lead the development of gender statistics globally.

As many of you already know, UNSD has been actively working on the production and monitoring of gender statistics since the early 1980s. UNSD has also been the secretariat of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics (IAEG-GS) since its creation, in 2006. This is a group of subject-matter experts, many of them attending this meeting, from national and international

statistical offices and other stakeholders, who are in charge of guiding and coordinating the *Global Gender Statistics Programme*, mandated by the UN Statistical Commission.

Of particular importance to our work is the fact that the UN Statistical Commission in February 2013 “*agreed to use a minimum set of gender indicators*”, identified by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, “*as a basic set for international compilation and national data collection*”. We believe this is an important step towards the harmonization of gender statistics across countries.

Important methodological work is also underway on selected gender indicators for which internationally agreed concepts and comparable data are not currently available. An example of such work is the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) project implemented by the UN Statistics Division and UN-Women, in collaboration with the World Bank, OECD, FAO, Asian Development Bank and African Development Bank, whose aim is to develop and test methodologies to measure asset ownership and entrepreneurship from a gender perspective by 2016.

Finally, I’m happy to report that my team is finalizing the publication *World’s Women 2015: trends and statistics* that will provide the latest analysis on the status of women compared to men in all critical areas identified in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action.

Dear colleagues,

This Forum, the fifth since the establishment of the IAEG-GS, provides the opportunity to take stock of international standards and their regional and national adaptations for the production of gender statistics; review and learn from statistical best practices and each other’s experience on selected critical areas for gender equality and women’s empowerment; and discuss with key data users such as government officials, donors and researchers about data, initiatives and

tools related to the collection, production, dissemination and use of gender statistics.

The fifth Forum will focus on measuring and monitoring gender equality in the following thematic “pillars”: women and the economy; violence against women; time use; political participation; the environment; and women in armed conflicts.

Each of these thematic pillars/sessions will be covered from different angles:

- (1) We will take stock of experiences and best practices and challenges in producing gender statistics, mainly by NSOs showing *what is done and how*;
- (2) We will hear from the data users community (mainly policy makers) *on how data are used*;
- (3) And we will learn from presentations from academia and regional and international organizations about research and experiences based on innovative approaches and initiatives on *how gender statistics can be improved*.

Finally,

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 national, regional and international statistical agencies and to assist national statistical systems to fully integrate a gender perspective in their work.

Let me conclude by expressing our appreciation for your participation in this meeting, and by thanking once again our colleagues from INEGI, for their kind hospitality, excellent job in organizing this event, and for their financial contribution and expert participation. The UN Statistics Division is looking forward to working with you all to promote the advancement of gender statistics.

Thank you and I wish you a very successful meeting.