

UNITED NATIONS



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**Statement by
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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
TO THE 41st SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates of the Statistical Commission,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you here to the 41st session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. I understand that once again, over 140 countries are represented here by their experts from the capital, making the Statistical Commission a truly global forum on official statistics. Since I assumed the post of the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, I have come to appreciate the importance of the work that you do. ‘Official Statistics’ is an area where the United Nations truly works well. Over the past sixty-four years, you have come together to work on statistical standards and methods to improve information systems at the national, regional and global level. The normative work of this body is an important example of how the United Nations Member States can effectively act in unison, especially at times where the ability of the international community to act together is sometimes questioned.

From many conversations I have had with Member States, I know that the United Nations Statistical Commission has gained over the years through its hard work considerable professional credibility and is recognized as the leading body of the global statistical system. To retain this lead position, the Commission must, however, remain relevant. In other words, it needs to be responsive to the national and global policy issues, and at the same time nurture the community of official statisticians around the world. As the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, let me therefore mention at the outset of this Commission session, some of these global policy issues and also highlight some of the agenda items of this forthcoming session.

Thanks to quick and co-ordinated government actions, the economic and financial situation has stabilized in the second half of 2009 in many countries. However, we still need to remain vigilant, as the recovery process from the global financial crisis is uneven. This crisis has highlighted the importance of reliable high frequency information, such as quarterly and monthly data in order not only to accurately assess the status of the economy, but also to monitor the impact and, thus, adequacy of policy measures taken. Furthermore, it is important at this point to assess the broad spectrum of economic, social and environmental impacts of the crisis, especially in the most vulnerable countries and population groups. For this, of course, we need an adequate information infrastructure: namely strong national statistical systems that provide consistent and reliable data on all aspects of economic and social development.

One continued global policy concern is, of course, gender equality and women's empowerment. This will be the focus of the debate of this year's Annual Ministerial Review in the Economic and Social Council in July 2010. In order to support this discussion it is important that the statistical information available to us should be broken down by gender in all statistical analysis. Furthermore, specific instruments, such as indicators to measure violence against women have to be developed. I am aware, that this Commission is working on these themes together with your 'sister'-Commission on the Advancement of Women. I also look forward to the publication of *World's Women* by the Statistics Division later this year.

The adoption of the "Millennium Development Goals" in 2000 marked an unprecedented global commitment for economic and social development. In this context, this year marks another important benchmark, as the international community will gather again in September 2010 to review progress made towards the MDGs and to identify the areas where our efforts must be intensified, if the goals are to be met by their deadline in 2015. It is obvious, that the contribution of your professional community is crucial in this context. An informed policy debate can only take place if it is supported by timely, consistent and relevant data at all levels. Your work on appropriate standards and methods to produce good quality statistical information is, therefore, more important than ever. I am pleased that in the past years, intense efforts have been made to reconcile the MDG data produced by national authorities and those by international agencies. There has been much effort by Statistics Divisions of DESA and other Regional Commissions, as well as the Funds and Programmes, to assist the countries to enhance their capabilities of MDG monitoring. This work must continue and be expanded.

As you know, the issues of climate change are politically sensitive and negotiation is continuing. I would like to urge the international statistical community to remain engaged in this area of work, especially in providing assistance and expertise in the Monitor, Report, and Verify (MRV) processes. I understand the Statistics Division will be consulting with Member States on the modalities of involvement.

I am encouraged by the fact that items related to the above mentioned global policy issues, namely agriculture statistics, environment statistics, finance statistics, gender statistics and development indicators are on your agenda. I am, moreover, satisfied to note that my colleagues from the Statistics Division of DESA are playing a leading role in facilitating dialogue in the international statistical community on new issues, such as the development of joint tools to assess statistical quality, a global inventory of statistical standards and the initiative to engage the mapping and statistical authorities on issues related to Global Geographic Information Management. I am also informed that you already had in the past days a fruitful exchange on the issues of 'Data Dissemination and Communication' and 'Effectiveness of National Statistical Systems'.

Distinguished delegates,

There is no doubt that your joint work will further strengthen your sense of a global professional community, which will enable the world to address our overarching concern through a sound and robust global statistical system. In this regard, allow me to comment on the proposed World Statistics Day. This is the first time that the global statistical community will hold observance of this Day to celebrate its many achievements and to uphold its core values of

‘Service, Integrity and Professionalism’. I strongly support this initiative. These three core values of the statistical profession are indeed critical pillars of public governance. I consider it my responsibility to assist you in promoting these core values, so that all users of statistical information around the world can continue to benefit from your noble contributions.

We, at DESA, specifically through the Statistics Division under the able leadership of Director Paul Cheung, are honoured to serve the Statistical Commission, and I would like to assure you that we remain committed to do so with our utmost energy and determination.

Thank you.
