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**OPENING STATEMENT
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ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)**

THE FORTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION

New York, 28 February 2012

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates of the Statistical Commission,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 43rd session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

In February 2008, I addressed this Commission for the first time. These were my exact words: “I am deeply impressed by the Statistical Commission’s rich heritage and many achievements.”

Almost four years later to the day, I am extremely pleased to be able to say this again.

As a professional community, your work is solid and appreciated. I often hear Member States making similar remarks.

We can all be proud of your accomplishments.

The work on the global statistical system is a United Nations success story. And this is thanks to the technical focus, professionalism and guidance provided by this Commission. The success of the 2010 World Statistics Day is even further proof.

Over the next few years, your Commission, and the newly-created Committee of Experts on GGIM, will face a significant challenge. You will need to bring statistical and geospatial information together, to build a new global information infrastructure and to serve users all over the world.

I am confident that together you will succeed in this endeavour.

Distinguished delegates,

A key success of the Statistical Commission is striking the balance between long term methodological work and the day-to-day demand of policy challenges.

And as we know, both are equally important.

Sound methodology forms the basis of comparable and credible global statistical information.

This Commission's work on internationally agreed methods lays the foundation that makes important data accessible and usable. And not only for policy makers, but for laypersons around the world.

The open data concept was first promoted by the United Nations. It is now a common theme around the world. It has indeed been a successful initiative.

Furthermore, the Commission's work has been invaluable for measuring progress towards internationally agreed development goals, such as the MDGs. Without solid and comparable data, this would not have been possible.

In your agenda for this year, two more major methodological advances will be discussed: The Revision of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the Revised Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES).

As the Secretary-General of the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) these two major outputs obviously caught my eye.

They are of great interest to me and my colleagues, who are working hard on the preparation of Rio + 20.

Only a few weeks ago, we had initial consultations on the zero draft of the Rio+20 outcome document. Sustainable development goals are likely to be one of the important contributions of the Conference. The methodological work that you consider in the next few days will help ensure that such goals are meaningfully measured when they are adopted by Member States.

This brings me back to the MDGs. This Commission has provided invaluable guidance and leadership in measuring progress towards this particular set of goals and targets.

I am pleased to learn that over the years, the work on MDG indicators was supported by efforts to build statistical capacity in developing countries. As we approach 2015 – the target year for the MDGs, discussions have started on how to shape the development agenda after 2015.

As we begin consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, which I believe should be of a sustainable nature, we will look to you for guidance on measuring progress.

In the coming months and years, the Statistical Commission's unique knowledge and experience in the setting up and maintaining of monitoring frameworks will be called upon once again.

Distinguished delegates,

I see that you have a full agenda before you. You will discuss a broad range of important issues, including population census, national accounts, quality management and statistical coordination.

I would especially welcome your input in addressing the coordination issue so that the UN system as a whole can respond to the needs of Member States faster, and more effectively.

I would like to assure you that we, as your Secretariat, remain committed to serving you with professionalism and dedication.

I wish you all the best for this session and also for your future work.

Thank you.
