

UNITED NATIONS



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**44th SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

**New York, 26 February 2013**

Madame Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to welcome you to the 44<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. I am honoured to address this Commission for the first time as Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

The Statistical Commission is unique, with over 120 countries represented by experts from their capitals. This makes it a truly global forum of official statisticians. The Statistical Commission is also known for its professional expertise and integrity, and for its spirit of cooperation and achieving results.

In its 67 years of existence, the Statistical Commission has been instrumental in the establishment of a global information infrastructure. The Commission has managed to provide methodological guidance to countries, and ensure the international comparability of our data.

The annual session of the Commission also offers a timely opportunity for addressing new and emerging issues. I would like to bring to your attention, at the outset, some of these issues, and then address some of the agenda items of this session.

Distinguished delegates,

For more than a decade now, this Commission has been providing guidance and leadership in monitoring progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. With less than three years to the deadline, much progress has been made. We know this, because many countries have been able to measure progress. Why? Because the statistical capacity of their national statistical systems was strengthened.

This was an important investment. Nevertheless, despite all our concerted efforts, too many countries are still struggling to produce reliable indicators. The need for further investments to strengthen national statistical capacity has to be born in mind as we forge a new development agenda.

As you know, the United Nations is now working closely with international partners to formulate a United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, with sustainable development at its core.

One of the main outcomes of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, was the agreement to develop a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs). This will support the monitoring of, and reporting on, a sustainable development agenda. The Rio+20 outcome, “The Future We Want”, indicates that the process of developing the SDGs, should be coordinated and coherent, with the process of considering the post-2015 development agenda.

Rio + 20 asked the Commission to launch a work programme on the broader measures of progress. This should be done together with other UN system entities and relevant organisations.

I understand that you dedicated your High Level Forum yesterday to discussing how best to respond to these challenges. The official statistical community will again contribute its expertise and hard work to ensure that sustainable development goals, and the post 2015 development agenda, are based on sound statistical fundamentals.

Allow me to emphasize this point. Sustained efforts are critical to build and maintain statistical capacity in developing countries. These efforts, together with sound statistical institutions, infrastructure and operations, should remain at the heart of our development agenda.

In 1994 this Commission adopted the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics at the global level. These Principles provide a framework for official statistics, and guide the work of government statisticians. The ten Fundamental Principles, which codify your professional ethics and commitment, have stood the test of time. They have been an important reference in countries around the world to build statistical systems.

I am aware that this Commission intends to seek the endorsement of the Fundamental Principles and their revised preamble by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The aim is to make the Fundamental Principles better known. Their full recognition outside the statistical community is important.

I can assure you of our assistance in this process. It will require a concerted effort between the Secretariat and Member States, both at the technical as well as at the political level. The presence in New York this week of so many Heads of National Statistical Offices from the capitals, is very reassuring. It provides an excellent opportunity for a dialogue between the technical experts and the colleagues in the Council and the Assembly.

Distinguished delegates,

You have an ambitious programme before you. You will consider the development of a framework for the integration of statistical and spatial information. Geospatial information is a rapidly developing field. Many countries need support in linking it with statistics.

You will also consider the development of an overarching measurement framework for international trade and globalization. One that responds to a strong demand for more comprehensive and integrated data to better understand the impact of trade on economic growth, employment and the interdependencies of countries.

Moreover, I am pleased that the implementation of adopted guidelines will be a major discussion topic, as this is a concern of many countries.

This year's Commission will have before it implementation plans and strategies for national accounts, environmental-economic accounting and environment statistics, agricultural statistics, as well as other areas of statistics.

I am also pleased that this Commission will discuss the regional statistical development in Africa. In addition to the official report, our colleagues from the UN Economic Commission for Africa have prepared an exhibition with rich displays of statistical information compiled throughout the African countries. It is a sign of what has been accomplished; as well as an occasion to discuss new challenges and opportunities for official statistics.

Distinguished delegates,

Statistics is shaping our understanding of the world. We, at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, are honoured to serve the Statistical Commission, which has been highly successful. This is owing to its unfailing focus on achieving results through cooperation and professional expertise.

I wish to ensure my Department's full support for the work of this Commission. I thank my colleagues in the Statistics Division for their hard work throughout the year. I assure you that we remain committed to serving you with professionalism and dedication.

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

Thank you.

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