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**Opening Remarks
50th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission**

**General Assembly Hall, UNHQ
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**Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my honour and pleasure to welcome you to the 50th Session of the Statistical Commission. This is a significant milestone in the history of the international statistical community under the leadership of the United Nations.

I am delighted that the Vice President of ECOSOC, Her Excellency Mrs. Juul, is with us today.

Excellencies,

The inherent power in data and statistics has never been more important than it is today. In an era when the whole international community is mobilized to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, we need data to inform policies, to understand the world we live in, and to

monitor and assess progress. The impressive work of the Statistical Commission on advancing the agenda for more and better data and statistics – to be able to measure all aspects of sustainable development – has never been more relevant. There are many initiatives to enhance the statistical capacity of countries. This Commission is pivotal to align these processes and coordinate global efforts to assist countries in building their capacities.

As a functional commission of ECOSOC, the Statistical Commission contributes to the deliberations at the High-level Political Forum every year by bringing the voice of statistics into the political processes. The past practices have demonstrated that the official statistics are essential for setting a strong foundation for evidence-based assessments. Your statistical offices are key in providing this evidence.

Distinguished delegates.

The 2030 Agenda has vast data needs. Ensuring that no one is left behind requires data at an unprecedented level of granularity. This translates into a wide-spread need for more and better financing for data and statistics. Not only for generating new capacities and using innovation to solve the data challenges of the 2030 Agenda. But also, for the basic underlying statistical systems and the strengthening of the existing statistical capacity.

If you attended yesterday afternoon's High-Level Forum on Official Statistics, you heard about the significant amount of work on financing for data and statistics carried out by the Commission's High-Level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building. A path has been set by this

Commission, through the Cape Town Global Action Plan, to modernize and enhance the capacity of national statistical systems to produce the needed data and statistics. Now, it falls upon you to implement this ambitious Plan.

Distinguished Delegates,

While we may be confident using our statistical system base on official data, we are now confronted with a number of challenges, just to name a few:

- First, universal access to official data, including capacity-building for some countries;**
- Second, use of non-official data to supplement the official statistics;**
- Third, to lead the process of integrating big data; and**
- Fourth, to make geospatial data and information available to those countries without such capacities.**

We need strong statistical foundations, and we need to integrate innovations over time. So, we need to use and integrate both traditional data sources – such as census, surveys, and administrative data – as well as emerging sources, such as artificial intelligence, citizen generated data, Big Data, and geocoded data.

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to congratulate the global statistical community in bringing together data communities and partnerships through events, such as the United Nations World Data Forum and the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress. At the successful second UN World Data Forum in Dubai last October, progress in addressing data challenges, new initiatives and work streams, were reviewed. The first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress, held in Deqing, Zhejiang Province, China last November, was an important milestone for strengthening of the role of geospatial information management, innovation and related technologies.

I had the pleasure of attending both of these events. I was very impressed by the commitment and the extensive outreach to the vast data communities and experts who gathered in both Dubai and Deqing, and their dedication to achieving sustainable development for all.

As you prepare for the third UN World Data Forum, which will be held in Bern in October 2020, some key areas to focus on might include:

- identifying ways to better incorporate new data sources into official data systems,**
- mobilizing more resources for data and improving sustainability of capacity development initiatives, and**
- improving coordination at all levels.**

Distinguished Delegates,

The United Nations is undergoing reform to reposition sustainable development at the heart of our work. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is an important part of this reform and our collective effort to make a real difference in the lives of people and leave no one behind. During this important period, we will continue serving the Statistical Commission with utmost commitment.

I wish you all the best in your discussions and I look forward to the outcomes of this 50th session of the Statistical Commission.

Here is to 50 more sessions of the Statistical Commission!

I thank you for your attention.
