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Opening remarks

53rd session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

Virtual, 28 February 2022 10:00 am

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to join you at this 53rd Session of the Statistical Commission.

This important annual gathering comes at a time when we continue to feel the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its devastating impact has created an urgent need to harness the power of data. Fortunately, global statistical systems have shown strength and resilience, despite the unprecedented demand for timely and disaggregated data and statistics.

However, the pandemic has exacerbated inequalities among national statistical offices, and highlighted significant data gaps. More than two years after the crisis began, connectivity issues, and inadequate remote data processing capabilities, are among the most common challenges faced. There is a growing consensus that a range of transformational changes are required, to enable the production and supply of timely, high-quality, and open data for the post-pandemic future.

In particular, two important initiatives are ongoing:

- First, the full implementation of the UN Legal Identity Agenda, which offers a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics, and identity management. By urging Member states to implement the UN Legal Identity Agenda, the Commission supports the Agenda, and emphasizes the critical role of the national statistical office, in the holistic model. However, its full implementation has been impacted by the pandemic. The urgent need to establish a continuous and universal civil registration of all vital events, has never been more evident.

- Second, the Statistical Commission contributes to the conversation of beyond GDP, through its work on updating the System of National Accounts and the development of a System of Environmental-Economic Accounting. This responds to the call made by the Secretary-General for new measures of progress of sustainability and people's well-being. And, the development of a broader framework for measuring economic activity in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Statistical Commission provides strategic guidance to national and global statistical and data systems. I commend the Bureau for their work to review and update the Commission's terms of reference, through an open, participatory-based, and transparent process. The revision process fits into the overall review that ECOSOC is conducting of its subsidiary bodies. It reflects the current and futuristic statistical and data needs faced by Member States as they:

- recover from COVID-19, and
- make efforts to get back on track to achieve the SDGs.

At the same time, policy and decision makers need to understand that data are a strategic asset. And, a priority demand in building back better following the pandemic. Increased financing for data and statistics, from both international and domestic resources, is essential to realize this.

The international community stands committed to supporting national statistical development. New joint solutions, like the World Bank's Global Data Facility, and the Bern Network's Clearinghouse for Financing Development Data, have the potential to transform implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan.

In all this, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN DESA, stands fully committed to support you in your important work.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a successful Commission session.

I thank you for your attention.
