

**Statement by Mr. Pali Lehohla, Statistician-General of Statistics South Africa
on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Statistical Commission**

On the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Statistical Commission, I would wish to reflect on South Africa's experience as we emerged from a period of almost 342 years of colonialism and 46 of these being years of official racism. We have now completed 13 years of freedom and in this period we have participated in this Commission. We would not be where we are if it were not for the support of this Commission. A milestone that we can refer to is that in 2009 South Africa will host the International Statistics Institute. Our aim is to make this occasion a truly African event and possibly the best ever meeting of the ISI. We would have not won the bid to host it if it were not for the contribution of this body.

We have initiated the Africa Symposium for Statistical Development, an initiative that will see the 53 African countries each hosting the symposia. Two such events have been hosted, one in Cape Town, South Africa in 2006 and the other one in Kigali, Rwanda in 2007. The next one is scheduled to be held in Ghana in 2008. So, in the next 51 years we should see the development of statistics on the African continent grow from strength to strength and when we convene in South Africa in 51 years from now in 2058 we should proudly say “mission accomplished”. Such an accomplishment cannot occur outside this Commission, in fact it is its integral part.

We have emerged out of conflict, a conflict we had with ourselves as a country and since then we have benefited handsomely from this Commission. Many parts of the world are in conflict and where there is conflict, the likelihood of statistical work to proceed uninterrupted or abused can be limited. The Middle East is one such part of the world immersed in conflict and we believe that this Commission will stand ready to support the sustenance of statistical work and rebuild that which conflict might have ravaged.

At this occasion I would like to congratulate the United Nations Statistics Division and wish all success to the Statistical Commission in its future work.