

**High Level Seminar on The Digital Economy: A Policy and Statistical Perspective
Beijing, People's Republic of China
15-17 November 2018**

**Welcome statement by Mr. Liu Zhenmin
Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

It is my great pleasure to open this important High Level Seminar on The Digital Economy: A Policy and Statistical Perspective.

Right off the bat, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our colleagues from the National Bureau of Statistics of China for organizing this international platform for an in-depth dialogue on the conceptual developments and practices for the measurement and policy framework of the digital economy. I would also like to thank all participants from various parts of the world for making the effort to attend this high level seminar.

This high level seminar has been organized at a very appropriate time. Many economies around the world are experiencing a so-called digital revolution. This has greatly transformed and changed the way in which businesses and governments produce goods and services and the way in which these goods and services are delivered to and used by consumers. The emergence of the digital economy has also changed the nature of labor market arrangements, how income is earned and how individuals live, communicate, travel and interact with one another. Not surprisingly, international and national efforts are made to measure the size of the contribution and impact of the digital economy to the national economy. For example, a recent study by Tencent (one of China's and the world's largest internet services companies) estimated that the combined value of the production of information and communications technology and integrated digital services amounts to 30 percent of gross domestic product of China in 2016.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While the digital revolution has brought benefits and gains to economies around the world, we should be mindful of how these benefits and gains are spread between economies and within

economies themselves and of the impact on the environment. Evidently, economies which can adopt the various elements of the digital revolution will tend to be better off than those who are slow to do so for various reasons. For example, the recently-released World Economic and Social Survey 2018 by the United Nations revealed that innovations in frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence and robotics automation are concentrated in a few economies. Even within the same economy, businesses and individuals which are nimble and agile enough to leverage on the digital economy may end up being better off than those who are not. The unfortunate result is a widening income and wealth disparity from negative outcomes such as job losses. Rightfully, this raises questions on how we can mitigate these inequalities in order to ensure that economies can grow in a sustainable and inclusive manner while reaping the benefits of the digital revolution.

We at the United Nations are well aware of these issues and have launched initiatives to tackle these issues. For example, the United Nations Secretary-General recently established a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation to raise awareness about the transformative impact of digital technologies across society and the economy and contribute to the broader public debate on how to ensure a safe and inclusive digital future for all, taking into account relevant human rights norms.

In addition, a Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) has been launched in order to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The TFM will facilitate multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships through the sharing of information, experiences, best practices and policy advice among Member States, civil society, the private sector, the scientific community, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.

At the same time, these initiatives need to be implemented with the backing of a sound and coherent policy and statistical framework. A policy framework is needed to assess how the various elements of government can work together in a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to formulate and implement policies to leverage on the positive benefits of the digital revolution. At the same time, it should consider how policies can be formulated to help those who have fallen through the digital crack. To measure the success of these policies, statistical evidence is needed. This statistical evidence should be gathered using a sound statistical framework based on

internationally-endorsed concepts and recommendations. The statistical framework should be able to measure the transformative impact of the digital economy in understanding the dynamics and the structural shifts in the economy and ultimately the impact of the digital economy on domestic and global economic activity, the use of the environment and the quality of life of individuals. These insights should allow for improved policy and decision making for sustainable and inclusive development by government and businesses in advancing and distributing the benefits of digital technologies and seizing their opportunities while reducing their risks on the economy, society and environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, at this seminar, I encourage you to be candid and vocal and share your views and insights on the policy and statistical aspects of the digital economy during the discussions. It is from this frank exchange of views and insights that we get to learn from one another and acquire new knowledge that we can apply in our work back home. Moreover, from your valuable inputs, we can propose a coherent and robust policy and statistical framework to monitor and measure the impact of the digital economy.

I wish you all a fruitful meeting and an enjoyable stay in Beijing.

Thank you.