

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD STATISTICS DAY

20 October 2010

Today marks the first observance of World Statistics Day, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly to recognize the importance of statistics in shaping our societies.

Statistics permeate modern life. They are the basis for many governmental, business and community decisions. They provide information and insight about the trends and forces that affect our lives. Collected in surveys and censuses – three billion people will participate in population and housing censuses this year alone – statistics affect the planning of schools, hospitals, roads and much else.

Statistics are a vital tool for economic and social development, including our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. For development to succeed, we need data collection and statistical analysis of poverty levels, access to education and the incidence of disease. Statistics are a central consideration in justifying almost every aspect of budgets and programmes that enable hungry children to be fed or that provide shelter and emergency health care for victims of natural disasters.

The United Nations Statistical Commission, established in 1947, has created international methodological standards and guidelines in virtually every area of statistics. It has played a key role in helping governments strengthen their statistical reporting, making data more available and comparable across countries and regions than ever before.

I commend the dedication that many statistical experts bring to their reports and publications. They carry out an essential public service -- one that promotes peace and democracy by giving citizens reliable and impartial public information about their communities. Their core values -- service, integrity and professionalism -- deserve full support in all nations.

However, as in so many other areas, developing countries often find themselves at a disadvantage, lacking funds to pay salaries, train staff and collect data. On this first World Statistics Day I encourage the international community to work with the United Nations to enable all countries to meet their statistical needs. Let us all acknowledge the crucial role of statistics in fulfilling our global mission of development and peace.