

WORLD STATISTICS DAY

Statement by Paul Cheung Director of the United Nations Statistics Division

Dear Colleagues, On 20th October this year, we celebrate the first ever World Statistics Day.

It is an historical moment for our big family of official statisticians around the world.

On this Day, we celebrate the many achievements of official statistics and the core values of Service, Integrity and Professionalism. This is a profession that we can be proud of.

We can be proud of the great wealth of reliable, good quality data that are being produced every day all over the world to inform policies, promote changes and monitor the progress of our societies.

We can be proud of the information we continuously provide to citizens in all countries to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance.

Statistics are crucial to economic and social development. They generate public debate and contribute to the progress of our nations. They are indispensable to academic research and the development of businesses and the civil society. Statistics ultimately serve everyone in society.

We have worked hard over many decades to define and implement global statistical standards which have resulted in high quality, comparable statistics. For example, the Consumer Price Index was agreed to in 1925 at the Second International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Since 1947, the UN Statistical Commission has guided us in our work in setting the standards and charting the path of the global statistical system.

The adoption by the UN Statistical Commission in 1994, of shared professional values enshrined in the "Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics" has further crystallized our professional responsibility; this is a major achievement of the global statistical community.





A key source of official statistics is the population and housing census which provides governments and the public with valuable data on the size, structure and characteristics of their population. As of 1 October this year, 106 countries and areas had conducted a census in the 2010 round, with another 117 more scheduled. The increasing number of countries that are able to carry out a census in a timely and efficient manner is one of our key achievements. This year, 3 billion people around the world will be counted.

Our work on the System of National Accounts and the compilation of GDP and related macroeconomic indicators offer the world a reliable system of measuring economic production and to monitor the increasingly complex economic transactions around the world. The 2008 revision of the System of National Accounts was a joint effort of all the countries in the world, and a product that we can be proud of.

Through the UN Statistical Commission, we continue to work on new statistical frameworks in vital statistics registration, gender equity, tourism, energy, trade, water, the environment, and many other social and economic areas.

All these theoretical frameworks would be meaningless without the hard work, professionalism and integrity demonstrated on a daily basis by dedicated experts in national statistical systems and international agencies around the world. The notion of a global professional statistical family, that transcends political, economic and cultural differences among countries, is perhaps the biggest achievement of all.

We recognise that the transfer of knowledge and strengthening national statistical capacity remains a priority for everyone. The 2010 UN MDG Summit had made it clear that improving statistical capacity is vital for monitoring global progress. We, at the UN, are committed to assisting countries so that every citizen in the world can rely on a well-functioning system that regularly produces, analyses, and disseminates relevant and quality statistics — statistics that respond to users' needs and concerns, statistics that can help us respond to new challenges and bring about policy changes.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and thank each and every statistician in the world for their immense contribution to the global statistical system.

Together, anchored in our shared values of Service, Integrity and Professionalism, we will make our profession and our statistical offices, a vital and valued institution of the world.