

Under-Secretary-General Message for World Statistics Day (20-10-2010)

(Message from Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, for World Statistics Day, observed on 20-10-2010)

This is an historical moment: for the first time the UN General Assembly has invited all member states and international partners to celebrate the first "World Statistics Day" on 20 October 2010. As the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, I seize this opportunity to pay a well-deserved tribute to the professional community of official statisticians around the globe. This community has worked steadfastly in the past decades in building a global statistical system that the world relies on. It is a community united in providing high quality, reliable and impartial statistical information for evidence-based policy formulation.

Reliable, timely data are crucial for economic and social development. They allow policy makers from member states and the UN system to analyze important trends on numerous issues, such as the pace at which the world is progressing to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Without solid information we cannot measure where we are and what needs to be done. If the world cannot get the right numbers, it cannot push for the right solutions.

Rapid technological developments offer new opportunities to collect and process a larger volume of official statistics with unprecedented speed. And the internet, smart phones and social networking services enable statistical services to disseminate the data to a wider spectrum of users, including policy makers, researchers, businesses, the media and the public at large.

However, access to new methodologies and technologies is uneven and many developing countries are struggling to build or even just sustain their national statistical capacity in this time of economic hardships. Strengthening national statistical capacity worldwide so that all countries have reliable data on economic and social issues must remain our highest priority.

After more than sixty years of work on official statistics at the United Nations, the Statistics Division in the UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs has much to celebrate. Countries from around the globe produce and submit reliable, accurate, scientific and comparable data to the division. The result is a global statistical system based on public service, professionalism and integrity. On this first World Statistics Day I commend the demonstration of these values by worldwide national statistical experts.

The Statistics Division and the entire Department of Economic and Social Affairs are honoured to serve the global statistical community and we remain committed to doing so with our utmost energy and determination.

