



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Statement on Programme Issues by Paul Cheung, Director of the United Nations  
Statistics Division to the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Statistical Commission**  
New York, 7-10 March 2006

**Statistical Commission 2006 Agenda item 5: Programme Questions  
Oral Introduction**

Paul Cheung, Director  
United Nations Statistics Division

Chair, Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

### Preparation for the Statistical Commission

I am happy to report that the preparation of the 37<sup>th</sup> Session of the Statistical Commission has been smooth. I would like to put on record my appreciation to all national statistical offices and international agencies who have helped in one way or another. In particular, I would like to thank Japan and Norway for preparing special reports. The 37<sup>th</sup> Session is well attended, with a total of 93 countries represented by the National Statistical Offices and another 9 by representatives from missions. Once again, I am grateful to the facilitation provided by France, Sweden, United Kingdom and PARIS21 to some countries for their participation.

This is the second year in which the revised methods of work were put into operation. The distinction of discussion versus information papers has improved the operational efficiency of the Commission. Overall, the feedback I received was that the Commission is happy with the current methods of work. We will continue to assist the Bureau and the Commission to review the functioning of the Commission.

The 37<sup>th</sup> Session considered 28 substantive papers, of which 13 were for discussion and 15 for information. In the preparation for the 38<sup>th</sup> session, we would keep the number of substantive papers at about the same level and would work with the Commission members to make the papers even more issue oriented. At present, the prevailing perception is that there is still too much reporting of 'processes' rather than discussion on 'issues'.

### Coordination of International Statistical Activities

The global statistical system has two large constituencies: the member states and the international agencies engaging in statistical activities. Through the mechanism of the Coordinating Committee of Statistical Activities (CCSA), there is now greater and improving coordination among the international agencies in international statistical

activities. Realizing the importance of having a set of principles to guide the activities of international agencies, the CCSA has over the past three years worked hard to arrive at a consensus. As guided by the Commission, the UNSD will work with other international agencies to ensure the full implementation of this set of principles. UNSD will continue to play a mediating and coordinating role between the member states and the international agencies should the need arise. While the number of issues raised by NSOs has declined, we still receive from time to time specific queries from countries on some aspects of the statistical activities managed by the international agencies. We hope a strong relationship between the countries and the international agencies will serve as a solid foundation for the global statistical system. In the next year, the CCSA has identified the implementation of SDMX, which is a data exchange protocol, as a key priority. It will also work on improving the coordination of technical cooperation activities.

#### Participation of Countries in International Activities

It is our firm belief that the global statistical system will function more effectively if all countries are true partners in the system, from methodological development, standard setting, to final implementation in national practices. In this regard, UNSD will continue to expand its work to promote participation of countries in all aspects of international statistical activities. This would range from expert group meetings, task forces, regional meetings, and especially the Commission Session itself. We have learnt from our work with countries that this feeling of being part of the statistical community through participation is critical in bringing countries together into a global system. In the past two years, I am happy to report that 1,028 officials from developing countries participated in UNSD events. Their contributions to these events have been invaluable and we look forward to continue supporting them as they increase their level of participation.

Mr. Chairman, I will now focus on specific programme initiatives:

### Economic Statistics

With the adoption of the revised ISIC and CPC classifications, we will now focus on their implementation. This will be done side by side with the implementation of the Integrated Economic Statistics Programme where we will focus on the complementarities of basic economic statistics with various higher-order accounting frameworks such as System of National Account and System of Environment-Economic Accounting. To strengthen the vertical integration between basic economic statistics across economic sectors and the SNA and SEEA, we will organize workshops and seminars to examine their linkages and provide a roadmap for their integration. I am pleased to report that we will work closely with the World Tourism Organization in organizing an international workshop on the compilation of tourism statistics. We will also organize workshops and expert group meetings on data collection issues including business registers. In this regard, we will work closely with the International Roundtable on Business Frames. While continuing our efforts to assist countries to develop their SNA, we will focus also on some specific issues this year; in particular, the measurement of the informal sector, the valuation of intangible assets and the improvement of sector statistics, especially industrial, distributive trade, tourism, and energy statistics.

### Demographic and Social Statistics

The 2010 world programme on population and housing census is picking up momentum. With the support of the countries, successful regional meetings on the preparation of the 2010 round have been held. I would particularly like to mention the 2006 Africa Symposium on Statistical Development which was held in Cape Town from Jan 31 to Feb 3, 2006 and organized by the Statistics South Africa. Apart from discussing general statistical development issues, the Symposium focused on the principles and recommendations on population and housing census. We are now working with Brazil to organize a similar symposium for the Latin America in 2007, building on

the success of a regional meeting organized by Mexico in July last year. We are grateful for the funding support from the World Bank on the 2010 World programme under the Marrakech Action Plan.

With the launch of the World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics, our focus on social statistics will turn now to emerging social issues. A key component of our work will focus on the development and implementation of methodologies on the assessment and monitoring of social systems under stress due to either natural disasters or political conflicts. Rapid assessment technologies will be developed in consultation with the countries. We will conduct a critical review this year on the prioritization of the issues that we will focus on in the coming years.

#### Environment Statistics

In environment statistics, we will continue to focus on water, energy, and waste statistics. A manual on water statistics has been developed. A similar manual will be developed for waste statistics. Our effort to assist countries to develop environment statistics is extremely important. Such statistics not only inform the government on the need for sustainable policies; they also help the countries to fully understand the interconnection between environment and the economy when integrated with national accounts.

#### Data Dissemination

The Statistics Division and other UN agencies have been collecting data from member states for close to 60 years. The data bases are important intellectual assets to the world. We intend to organize the databases and greatly enhance their accessibility throughout the world. Efforts are underway to develop our databases better and make them more accessible. In this regard, we are grateful to Sweden for their funding support. Over the years, many of you have expressed your satisfaction with our website as the knowledge center of the global statistical system. We appreciate the support given to us. We will continue to enhance our website so that it can fulfill its mission. We will put more data and substantive contents on our website.

## Technical Cooperation

As many of you would know, UNSD plays a central role in helping the countries to build strong national statistical systems which in turn are the building blocks of a solid global statistical system. We will continue to expand our work in technical cooperation. In this regard, we will focus on three key aspects: i) knowledge transfer of methodological development and best practices, ii) support good statistical governance, and iii) help develop sound and sustaining national statistical infrastructures. In our work, we are grateful for the assistance of our partners, such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN-Habitat, UNEP, UNESCO, ILO, FAO, and WHO. But most important of all, we are grateful to the countries with a more developed statistical system for sharing with us their resources and expertise. Without their help, our technical assistance efforts would be greatly hampered. In the coming years, we will work closer with countries with technical expertise to develop programmes to assist countries that are in need of such expertise.

## II. Workprogramme 2006/7 for UNSD

As you may know, the UN functions in a two-year budgetary cycle. The budget and workprogramme for the years 2006 and 2007 has been adopted by the General Assembly last year and the Commission had taken note of the Division's current work programme in its 36<sup>th</sup> Session. We will present the detailed work programme for the 2008-2009 cycle to the Commission in its 38<sup>th</sup> session in 2007.

Thank you, Chair.

