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Second World Statistics Day 2015

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Distinguished colleagues around the world,

Today we are celebrating World Statistics Day 2015! And I would like to thank you for inviting me to join your special celebration for a few minutes. Today we are united as a global professional community and as a global statistical family – in delivering an important message: better statistics bring better lives. The fundamental importance of statistics has never had a stronger recognition than it is receiving today. The call for better data for sustainable development resonates strongly with all of us.

During our working days we are bound by a shared professional ethos and today on this day of celebration we are rightfully bound by a shared sense of professional pride, conscious that what we do every day has an impact on people's life. Whether we work on a census or on a survey or on administrative records; Whether we focus on collecting, processing or making data available to all; Whether we double, triple or quadruple check data..... This day is for us – for each and every statistician around the world. And the celebrations take many different forms: from seminars to panel discussions, from creative competitions to songs; and it is generally a happy affair – and rightly so - appropriately symbolized by our little blue friend - the smiling statistician.

We are living in a fast-evolving world. Our last World Statistics Day was only 5 years ago, but just consider how much has happened and changed since then: Let me highlight just a few milestones:

- 2010 – the most successful and comprehensive Global Census round ever is conducted;
- 2011 – the United Nations launches a programme on Global Geospatial Information Management, studying, among other things, the integration of statistical and geospatial information;
- 2013 – the Statistical Commission launches a Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics;
- 2014 – the UN General Assembly adopts the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics at the highest political level;
- 2014 again – the UN Secretary General commissions a report on “Data Revolution for Sustainable Development”;
- 2015 – the last Millennium Development Goal indicator report is released, completing an extra-ordinary chapter of global cooperation in statistics, led by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on MDG indicators, delivering annually, not only to the policy makers but also to the

public, the best available data sets to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

- And this year again – for the first time in history the Chair of the UN Statistical Commission addresses the UN General Assembly, to obtain the technical mandate to formulate the new indicator framework for the newly adopted United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

And during that same 5-year period, at national level, many of you were experiencing on the one side the opportunities provided by fascinating ICT developments, but on the other side the twin pressures of ever-increasing user-demands paired with often decreasing resources. Many national statistical offices responded with a mixture of rationalization and modernization to these new challenges.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda epitomizes the challenges but also the opportunities ahead of us: The agenda itself recognizes the centrality of statistics and data to development. The formulation of a new, global, regional and national indicator architecture, provides high visibility for our profession and uniquely opens the door for an inter-active dialogue with policy decision makers at all levels. We need to provide our best professional advice: it is clear that the significantly broader development agenda with a higher focus on disaggregation will require more resources, new methodological developments, integration of new data sources with traditional ones, the building of partnerships and increased cooperation within and across countries. To put it in my simple favourite phrase these days: Sustainable Development will need to be supported by Sustainable Statistics.

Therefore, our joint project for the future is to continue to build strong National Statistical Systems, National Information Systems, under the leadership of the National Statistical Offices. This can only be successful if the statistical community has strong support and full political backing from the highest national authorities. In this context this World Statistics Day is an excellent opportunity to start a conversation between users and producers of statistics and data at all levels. It is an opportunity to showcase our achievements centred around the key concepts of quality and sustainability, and to demonstrate our unique position as official statisticians to contribute to improving the lives of many through our products – living up to our vision statement: Better Data. Better Lives.

Dear colleagues,

You will not be surprised, if I tell you that I am a firm believer in sub-regional, regional and global cooperation, where we can effectively connect and share knowledge through the development of standards, which is the essence of our international work. With the UN Statistical Commission we have a powerful platform to build on our past accomplishments and to prepare jointly for future challenges. We at the UN Statistics Division are fully committed to supporting you and the Statistical Commission and we are already looking forward to seeing many of you here next year in March.

Thank you very much for your attention – and Happy World Statistics Day.
