

Opening Statement by Paul Cheung, Director, United Nations Statistics Division

**Work Session Convened by the Friends of the Chair Group
on Integrated Economic Statistics
6 – 8 June 2007, Bern, Switzerland**

Dear colleagues,

I would like to join Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz, Director of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office in welcoming you to this work session on integrated economic statistics jointly organized by our offices. Let me express my thanks and appreciation to Ms. Bürgi-Schmelz and her staff for the preparation and hosting of the meeting.

As you know, the Statistical Commission attributes great importance to promoting the development of an integrated approach to economic statistics, realizing the need for improving the capability of countries to compile quality basic economic statistics that are also consistent with macroeconomic frameworks. In 2006, the Commission discussed the development of economic statistics in an integrated way as the appropriate strategy for national and international statistics programmes and initiated reviewing best practices as well as conducting necessary conceptual work. We are very pleased that during these three days members of the Friends of the Chair group will be available to share their experience and ideas about this important and relevant topic.

There is an emerging view on the concept of integration of economic statistics as reflected in the agenda of this meeting. First, the policy relevance and other user requirements are extremely important when we evaluate the benefits of an integrated economic statistics programme. Second, attention will then be given to statistical integration frameworks that bring together the various data collection activities, including statistical registers, surveys, censuses, classifications and use of specific instruments such as integrated questionnaire design. Related to the statistical input process, it should be evaluated how the use of administrative data in combination with economic surveys contribute to producing economic statistics in an integrated way. Finally, the meeting will review the role of national statistical institutions and the characteristics of institutional

arrangements that facilitate creating, maintaining and updating integrated databases and the underlying methodological standards.

Moreover, based on the compiled inventory of economic statistics standards that was circulated earlier, this meeting will try to reach a consensus on which of the economic statistics domains needs further development and what institution would be best suited to take a leadership role. These are just some of the highlights from the three-day programme ahead of you.

It is my expectation that the conclusions derived from the discussions on the broad range of agenda items will produce ideas and feed into the concept paper on the modalities of the integrated approach to economic statistics that the Friends of the Chair will submit for the Statistical Commission's consideration in 2008. Therefore the discussion of the outline of the concept paper and suggestions for its content will be a crucial part of the series of sessions on substantive topics during this meeting. Your continued interest and commitment to contribute to the drafting of the concept paper in the coming months is very welcome and much appreciated.

Concerning the planning of activities beyond the present meeting and the completion of the concept paper, there is the intention to develop a Handbook on Integrated Economic Statistics. When the Commission reviews the concept paper, we will seek its guidance on the continuation of work and the direction to be taken. We will continue carrying out our mandate received from the Commission relying on the close cooperation of interested national and international statistical agencies.

In this spirit of collaboration and joint efforts, I wish all participants a productive, successful and pleasant meeting.