



Remarks

by

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**High Representative
and**

Under-Secretary-General

**for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States**

at the side-event on

“3-years on: What have the SDGs done for National Statistical Systems?”

13:15-14:30

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

As your Paris 21 Champion for Statistics for Development, you could say it is my duty to be with you!

Let me assure you, I am here because I very strongly believe in the critical role you play in our common effort to move Agenda 2030 from commitment to reality for people.

So, thank you for having me with you!

Agenda 2030 may well be the most ambitious ever agenda the global community set itself. I have two certainties:

we must reach the overarching goal of Agenda 2030 for sustainable and inclusive development and having timely data for notching up our efforts to get there is critical.

Some say we live in a “post-truth “digital era. It is certain that we live a moment of highly fragmented information and data flows and landscapes. There is instant global travelling of very abbreviated and too often out of context individual opinions which can quickly turn into opinion making leaving wide-open the scope for misuse of data and information.

Against this backdrop, you all have an extremely strategic role to play!

Robust, comprehensive and timely official statistics and data are essential to policy design and implementation and to assess progress in SDG implementation.

I do not need to tell you that timely and accurate data have large bearing on political and policy processes.

We have challenges in this.

I want to look at this from both the supply-demand side and the end-user perspective.

I have two telling examples:

Bangladesh found that data for only 70 indicators of the SDGs were available from the existing system built largely around the MDGs. Data for another 108 indicators could be generated by modifying the system. However, the data for an additional 63 indicators would require entirely new efforts.

Smaller countries face even more challenges especially when National Statistical Offices have 10 or less staff!

The SDGs present a challenge but also a unique opportunity for NSOs to show their relevance.

At the time of the MDGs, some countries leveraged the demand for data to attract resources needed to invest in capacity building for data collection, analysis and dissemination.

The National Strategies for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), promoted by PARIS21, to accompany the launching of the MDGs were a real improvement in the way NSOs were managed and funded, and how their work programs were designed and implemented.

From a demand-side, the SDGs challenge us to produce much more, more complex data (including disaggregated data) and analysis. It all has to be done fast and against a backdrop of often fake data and information.

In short, the speed and accuracy of supply has to be notched up and NSOs need to invest in end-user education as we must urgently build a culture of quality evidence and improve data literacy in societies.

There is an added dimension on the supply-side. The debate so far has focused on which indicators to produce to monitor the SDGs, with relatively little attention paid to the critical dimension of their alignment with national development priorities. National statistical systems must be placed within larger governance frameworks, including strategic planning, budgets and plans, and to coordinate statistics across sectors.

NSOs have a leading role in this.

Let there be no doubt, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS need to strengthen their statistics institutions.

For this, a clear mandate for the NSO to lead and coordinate this work across the statistical system is critical. In many cases, statistical legislation is limited and does not provide for such a function or mandate.

I have two key action messages to conclude:

one, the support of international agencies will continue to be crucial to support governments in their drive to prioritize improving statistics and empowering statistics institutions

two, there is an urgent and critical need for additional resources for statistical systems - financial, human and infrastructure.

The Sustainable Development Solutions Network has estimated that “a total of US\$1 billion per annum will be required to enable 77 of the world’s lower-income countries to catch-up and put in place statistical systems capable of supporting and measuring the SDGs.”

With this, I am sure, your work is cut out!

I thank you for your attention and very much look forward to listening and exchanging with all of you here.
