

**Welcoming statement at PARIS21/UNESCAP Ulaanbaatar Forum**

9-11 October 2006

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*Your Excellency Mr Ts. Nyamdorj, Speaker of Parliament,*

*Dear Mr. Byambatseren, Chairman of the National Statistical Office of Mongolia,*

*Dear colleagues,*

Welcome to this High-Level Forum on Strategic Planning in Statistics for East and North-East Asian Countries!

On behalf of ESCAP, I wish to thank the Japan Human Resource Development Fund and United Nations Development Programme for their generous support for this Forum.

I would also like to express our deep appreciation to Chairman Mr Byambatseren and his team at the Mongolian National Statistical Office, for hosting this High-Level Forum, for the excellent arrangements and facilities, and for giving all of us the opportunity to enjoy the peaceful city of Ulaanbaatar, and its remarkable tradition and history.

You have indeed set a new high standard for such events. Throughout the preparation for this Forum, we have been impressed repeatedly by your commitment and openness, your vision and initiative, and the competency and effectiveness of all the staff. We appreciate especially your efforts to not only improving the Mongolian national statistical system, but also promoting the overall statistical development in the region.

As the last of four sub-regional Forum, I am confident that, with your dedication and support, with the active participation of all the national and international participants, and the contribution of our facilitator, Mr. Fred Ho, this Forum will become the high point of the entire project – providing all of us the opportunity to share diverse experiences, identify common challenges, and forge a collective vision for the future national statistical systems, and more effective strategies for international technical cooperation in the area.

Indeed, this occasion marks a timely opportunity for us to reflect upon the importance of National Strategic Planning for Statistical Development, and to discuss how to best promote and implement it to ensure that national statistical system is built upon solid legal foundation

and the fundamental principles of statistics, with proper political support and adequate resources, a system that can fully meet the demand of the society, and effectively support evidence-based policy making and human development.

We are really encouraged that we have present with us today not only high-level representatives of statistical producers but also policy makers or statistical users, not only national participants but also international and bilateral donors. I am sure we will have very fruitful exchanges of ideas and experiences, and will be in a position to formulate some concrete proposals.

As you will agree, much has been well said by the previous speakers. Please allow me to endorse the points made by my colleague from PARIS21, and to join His Excellency Mr Ts. Nyamdorj, and Mr. Byambatseren in wishing the Forum a success and all of you a pleasant experience in Ulaanbaatar.

Taking this opportunity, I also wish to wholeheartedly congratulate our Mongolian colleagues on the occasion of your country's 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of statehood – an immeasurable achievement indeed. I must admit that it was my childhood dream to, one day, cross over the Great Wall to this land, to experience the spirit of *Chingis Khaan* and his people, and to understand better our shared history and inspirations. I am so glad that it took this special occasion for me to come and to come on an auspicious day of the year.

As Mr. Chairman said yesterday, this auspicious moment of the year marks a wonderful beginning for this event. Let's take this opportunity and work together to make the Forum a real success!

Thank you.