



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

ESA/STAT/AC.103/
16 June 2005

**Meeting of the Expert Group
on International Economic and
Social Classifications
New York, 20-24 June 2005**

Opening Statement

Paul Cheung, Director
United Nations Statistics Division

I am pleased to welcome all of you to the meeting of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications. This meeting brings together participants from various countries and international organizations representing both custodians and users of statistical classifications. It cannot be stressed enough that the work of this Expert Group provides the basis for a coherent and comparable statistical data collection around the world. I would like to thank you for accepting the invitation to this meeting and agreeing to contribute with your expertise and ideas to the deliberations.

Among the diverse topics on its agenda, this meeting will focus on the revisions that are in progress for ISIC (the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities), CPC (the Central Product Classification) and ISCO (the International Standard Classification of Occupations).

It gives particular significance to this meeting that it will conclude several years of international collaboration on the revision of ISIC, before ISIC Revision 4 will be submitted for approval to the Statistical Commission in March 2006. In keeping with the mandate by the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Statistics Division has taken the request for transparency and involvement of all countries in this revision process very seriously. In this process, which has spanned several years, we have communicated with all countries and taken their views into account, not only through the official rounds of consultation on the classification, but also through workshops in different parts of the world, cooperating with regional commissions and other regional organizations, such as ASEAN, CARICOM, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP and ESCWA.

The deep involvement of countries in the revision process cannot be emphasized enough. Their many comments and views have been taken into account and the finalized new version of ISIC reflects the consensus of the global statistical community. As a result, countries support for this version significantly increases our expectations for its successful implementation. Moreover, considerable efforts have been made to harmonize

ISIC with other classifications, addressing needs of statistical systems arising out of the continuing globalization.

A large part of the development work was accomplished by the Technical Subgroup whose members also form part of this Expert Group and I would like to thank them for their efforts and support.

Another objective of this meeting is to review and discuss the final draft of the CPC Version 2, to be followed by a global consultation on the proposed changes. Similarly to the revision of ISIC, the ongoing work on the CPC aims at supporting the harmonization of statistics worldwide and the improvement of international comparability of data.

At this meeting, the Expert Group will also pay special attention to the revision of ISCO, which is another key classification under the mandate of this group and we expect that this revision process will be conducted using the same open consultation process that ISIC and CPC have employed so far.

We are happy to see the large number of participants at this meeting, bringing special expertise on these classifications to the table to make these important revision processes a success.

Looking ahead, the meeting is requested to discuss future work, in particular strategies for the application and implementation of the revised ISIC, CPC and ISCO. In order to provide practical and useful technical assistance to the countries, and help to make easier for them the process of adoption of the revised classifications, the development of tools of implementation should receive sufficient attention. Namely, the Implementation Guide for ISIC is considered as such a tool to support the implementation process and deserves special attention.

I would like to conclude with expressing my hope that this meeting of the Expert Group, as the previous ones will further improve and ensure the harmonization of classifications, thus contributing to the conceptual clarity of statistics and producing globally consistent and comparable data. Traditionally, this Expert Group has served with excellence as the central coordinating body for the development and implementation of classifications. In this spirit I wish you good work, inspiring discussions and a pleasant week in New York.