



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**8<sup>th</sup> UN Regional Cartographic Conference  
for the Americas  
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### **Opening Statement**

Paul Cheung, Director  
United Nations Statistics Division

**Distinguished Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Eighth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas. As you know, the UN Statistics Division, is the technical division in the United Nation which is responsible for substantively servicing this Conference. I can assure you that my staff and I are committed to assisting you to make this Eighth Regional Conference a success.

Today, with advances in information and communication technologies driving the creation of new businesses, the cartographic/geographic information community is facing crucial challenges: how to harness the enormous potential of geo-spatial technologies and go beyond local and national level applications to regional and global applications, and how to achieve an integrated management of geo-spatial datasets using Internet and multimedia in order to disseminate information required for crucial decision making in support of social, economic and environmentally sustainable development.

In this regard, the Eighth UN Regional Cartographic Conference provides an opportunity to emphasize technical and economic geographic information issues as well as institutional and other non-technical problems, and to assess the efforts being accomplished in the development of spatial data infrastructures so far.

**Distinguished Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to stress that the United Nations Statistics Division is promoting the **strategic use** of geographic information, including geographical names, in developing countries, through a variety of activities: (i) we organize the UN Regional Cartographic Conferences as well as the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names; (ii) we develop methodological publications and (iii) we assist with ad-hoc training courses and technical projects, mostly in cooperation with host governments and international scientific and professional organizations.

More specifically, UNSD is supporting the **use** of GIS in census mapping operations, including the use of GPS and satellite imagery for spatial data collection and demarcation of statistical enumeration areas. In the last decade, the Statistics Division has

promoted the development of geographical information systems for population and demographic statistics in developing countries through technical cooperation projects supported by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). For example, one project had developed methodologies for GIS applications in population and related statistics and as a consequence we published a handbook “*on GIS and digital mapping for population and housing censuses*”. I would like to assure you therefore of our continued support in this area.

I hope this Conference will continue the tradition of shaping a positive vision for the future and proposing avenues that allow Spatial Data Infrastructure for sustainable development to evolve into a new stage, and I wish participants a very productive and successful event.