



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS  
STATISTICS DIVISION

**International Seminar on Green Economy and Official Statistics  
6 - 8 July 2011, Seoul, Republic of Korea**

### **Opening Remarks**

Paul Cheung, Director  
United Nations Statistics Division

Mr. Soogil Young, Chairman, Presidential Committee on Green Growth  
Commissioner Insill Yi,  
Distinguished Participants from our Host Country,  
Distinguished Colleagues from National Statistics Offices and International Agencies,

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the United Nations Statistics Division to welcome you to this International Seminar on Green Economy and Official Statistics. I am particularly pleased that the Seminar is being held in conjunction with our friends from Statistics Korea and I would like to thank up front Commissioner Yi for the support that Statistics Korea has given to the Statistics Division, and to statistics development more generally, particularly here in the Asia/ Pacific region, but more broadly as well.

In fact, this is the fourth international seminar that UNSD has conducted in collaboration with Statistics Korea, the previous three being a seminar on climate change and official statistics in December 2008; a seminar on economic censuses in July 2009; and a seminar on information and communication technology statistics in July 2010. From the feedback we have received from country participants in these previous seminars, I know that the support of Statistics Korea is very much appreciated.

I should note that we will be collaborating again with the government of the Republic of Korea later this year, with the conduct of a high level forum on global geospatial information management.

On 24 December 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution agreeing to hold the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 -- also referred to as 'Rio+20' or 'Rio 20'. The Conference seeks three objectives: securing renewed political commitment to sustainable development; assessing the progress and implementation gaps in meeting already agreed commitments; and addressing new and emerging challenges. The Member States have agreed on the following two themes for

the Conference: a green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and an institutional framework for sustainable development.

During the recent global financial crisis, the UN General Assembly and several UN agencies had underscored that the crisis represented an opportunity to promote green economy initiatives as part of the stimulus packages being put in place to support the recovery. The Green Growth Declaration adopted at its 2009 Ministerial Council Meeting invited the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to develop “a Green Growth Strategy in order to achieve economic recovery and environmentally and socially sustainable economic growth.” Subsequent work by the OECD on the strategy has been supported with the development of measurement tools and indicators to monitor progress.

Policy issues at the international level have been paralleled with developments at the country level, perhaps none more so than here in the Republic of Korea, as I am sure we will learn more this morning.

A green economy has been recognised as one of the critical development models for the future that improves well-being and social equity while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. The concept carries the promise of a new growth paradigm that is friendly to the earth’s ecosystems and can also contribute to poverty alleviation.

The starting proposition for this Seminar is that official statisticians will be asked to inform on green economy issues. Indeed, for a number of countries, work is already well under way. The Seminar provides us with an opportunity to reflect on some of the policy issues that underpin the concept of a green economy and to take stock of whether our statistical frameworks, classifications and methodologies are adequate to support the statistical work.

With this in mind, we see three outcomes for the Seminar:

- A recognition that official statistics will be required to inform on green economy issues and that national statistical systems will accordingly need to adapt.
- An emerging understanding of the key issues/indicators that official statistics will need to focus on.
- A sense of the work that international agencies and the United Nations Statistical Commission might best focus on, over and above what they are already doing, to support countries in this work.

It is expected that Volume 1 of the revised *System of Environmental and Economic Accounts*, or SEEA, will be submitted for adoption by the 2012 session of the United Nations Statistical Commission. My Division is also coordinating the work of the Expert Group on the Revision of the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES), with a view to submitting the revised FDES and the Core Set of Environment Statistics to the 2012 Session of the Statistical Commission. I have in mind that a summary of the key conclusions arising from this Seminar might form part of the package of documentation that will be submitted to the Statistical Commission.

In light of the discussions at the Statistical Commission, we will want to ensure that statistics issues receive appropriate attention at the Rio+20 Conference. Beyond that immediate priority, the United Nations Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Regional Commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the United Nations Environment Program, will be pursuing a Development Account Project on Measuring the Green Economy in Support of the Development Goals: Statistics, Indicators and Instruments. This project will focus on the building of statistical capacity in developing countries in the area of economic and environmental indicators necessary to measure the green economy, in particular in the areas of energy, industry, water and waste statistics. The project is expected to start in 2012 and run through to 2015. The deliberations at this Seminar will provide useful input as we firm up the modalities for that project.

Distinguished colleagues,

Let me conclude by thanking all of you for participating in this Seminar, with special thanks to our presenters who, I am sure, will stimulate lively discussions. I hope that you will find the Seminar to be valuable, as you think about how green economy issues may impact official statistics in your countries.