

16 April 2007



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Meeting of the Expert Group
on International Economic and
Social Classifications
New York, 16-18 June 2007**

Opening address

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 implementation process for the newly revised ISIC (the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities) and CPC (the Central Product Classification), the revision of ISCO (the International Standard Classification of Occupations), discuss possible revisions for the BEC (the Classification by Broad Economic Activities) and other classifications with the Family of International Economic and Social Classifications.

At its last meeting in March 2007, the United Nations Statistical Commission has agreed to a proposal for an implementation process for ISIC and CPC. This Expert Group now has the task of operationalizing this proposal and discussing more detailed steps to ensure a comprehensive and consistent implementation of the classifications. At the meeting of the Statistical Commission, member countries have argued for a speedier implementation and requested that the proposed implementation dates be advanced. This will make the work of this group more challenging, but it also underscores the high importance countries place on these classifications and the strong interest they have in actually implementing them. In the context of implementation, the Commission emphasized the strong need for implementation tools, such as correspondence tables and a user guide and the Expert Group is expected to further guide their development.

The Technical Expert Group for Updating the International Standard Classification of Occupations has presented an updated draft structure to the

Commission, and the Expert Group is now expected to review the process undertaken, review the proposed draft structure and provide guidance on outstanding issues before ISCO moves on to further stages of the revision and approval process.

A large part of the development work was accomplished by the Technical Subgroup on ISIC and CPC and the Technical Expert Group for Updating the International Standard Classification of Occupations, whose members also form part of this Expert Group and I would like to thank them for their efforts and support.

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 revisions and implementation processes a success.

Looking ahead, the meeting is requested to discuss future work, in particular strategies for the revision of other classifications within the Family of International Economic and Social Classifications, as well as look at the future scope of the Family itself.

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.