



Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

*...an introduction
...and a presentation of the session's programme*

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro just one year ago concluded its work with a final document called "The future we want". This document - which I am sure that you are all familiar with - will without any doubt have a considerable impact on the activities of national statistical offices and international organisations.

This conference has been an opportunity for the international community to reaffirm the concept of sustainable development defined in 1992 in the Rio Declaration on the Environment and Development. The final document is also a reminder that the eradication of poverty remains one of the international community's top priorities and confirms that sustainable development requires:

- sustained, equitable and inclusive economic growth;
- reduction of inequality;
- improvement of basic living conditions;
- encouragement of equitable social development for all;
- promotion of integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems

The Ambassador, Mr Gerber, has presented us process which will lead to the establishment of the sustainable development goals called for in "The future we want" as well as the challenges posed by the definition and the measurement of these for the statistical community.

It has already been said several times over the last few months, notably at the high-level forum held back-to-back with the United Nations Statistical Commission in Feb-

ruary 2013 in New York and at the Sixty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Europe in April 2013, that the statistical community has a duty to respond to new needs in terms of statistical information, particularly through greater measurement of progress. It is also essential that we bear in mind experiences from the definition of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over ten years ago. It is namely necessary that statisticians are just as involved in the definition of the SDGs as they are in measuring these objectives and communicating the results.

Fortunately, I would like to point out here that the statistical community has not been sitting on its hands for the last two decades. In reply to Agenda 21 which was adopted in 1992, particularly chapter 40, many countries and international organisations have developed indicator systems which are dedicated to measuring sustainable development. These systems work - some have worked for many years - providing governments and society with relevant information concerning the developments observed on the road to sustainable development. Other developments of the international statistical system, such as the system of environmental-economic accounting (SEEA) which is the topic of our discussion this afternoon, are also a response to requests for statistical information made twenty years ago.

Other studies have been launched with the aim of expanding the scope of the measurement of progress beyond its sole economic component. Until now, this has almost exclusively been symbolised by the GDP. These studies, some of which have been performed outside the statistical community, include the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report and the European Union's "GDP and beyond" initiative as well the OECD's "How's life?" project.

The UNECE, Eurostat and the OECD have also taken action. The 2005 CES programme included a seminar on the measurement of sustainable development and was at the origin of the joint UNECE-Eurostat-OCDE working group on Statistics on Sustainable Development (WGSSDI) launched the same year. Its studies are summarised in the "Measuring Sustainable Development" report published in 2009.

These three organisations decided in 2009 to continue their efforts with a view to a better measurement of sustainable development and created the Joint UNECE-Eurostat-OCDE Task Force on Measuring Sustainable Development (TF-SD) which has just submitted a report that we will have the pleasure of discussing here on Wednesday morning.

Without prejudicing discussion concerning this subject, I can already say that I consider this report to be a significant contribution to the studies and the developments that the statistical community will undertake to follow the process of Rio+20, particularly with regard to the definition and the measurement of the SDGs.

Based on Brudtland's definition of sustainable development, this report is indeed the work of statisticians who have worked independently of any political authorities, relying on current scientific knowledge and key insights from the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi. It proposes a measurement of well-being combined with that of human capital, social and environmental stocks and accords special importance to the measurement of inter- and intragenerational inequalities. It innovates by conceptualising the interactions between the countries in terms of sustainable development (global dimension). In this sense, it also goes far beyond the recommendations of Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi. It offers a concrete scope of application for the SEEA and maps out areas with regard to future developments of the measurement of social and human capital stocks. Finally, it proposes concrete and pragmatic application on the basis of a list of indicators likely to be carried out by most national statistical offices and international organisations.

This report provides a solid basis for studies associated with the measurement of SDGs by helping to protect them from unforeseeable modifications to political agendas and by encouraging policymakers to consider all aspects of sustainable development in a balanced way.

The definition of the SDGs will undoubtedly bring about new requirements in terms of statistical information as well as other challenges for the statistical community, including the need to

- engage in dialogue with the policymakers and society.
- encourage the definition of objectives and measurable targets
- communicate the results in a simple way that is understandable to the majority