

Dear Statistics Friends and Colleagues,

It is a great honour and privilege for me and all my colleagues at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, to be invited to the Data Matters Festival celebrating official statistics and data science. The State of Palestine and its Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics are the right venue for demonstrating the values of official statistics along with the rapid development of methods and approaches to production, analysis and communication of statistics and data.

By my participation at the Data Matters Festival, I would like to honour the resilience of the Palestinian people, to acknowledge great efforts of Palestinians in development and working to ensuring better lives, and obviously for the quality of the Palestinian official statistics that was acknowledged by the international statistical community at many occasions. The Palestinian official statistics is an example to be followed by many others, the PCBS demonstrates that what role the official statistics plays in the dynamic development of today's societies.

The primary role of official statistics is to provide data to policy makers, businesses and citizens – to facilitate the formulation of strategies, development plans, business operations and everyday life. Statistics is not an accounting and auditing tool, it has much broader role in provision of timely, relevant and impartial data. This is particularly important at this time of the rapid socio-economic and political development of the society that brings with numerous challenges. We need more frequent but reliable statistical estimates with a cross sectional breakdown combined with a detailed geographical breakdown. Statistics has to display potential disparities between ethnic and social groups, generations, gender, etc. while statistics has also to capture the local specifics of small geographical areas. Therefore, we need to complement the traditional methods of statistical surveys and censuses with alternative sources including a greater use of administrative registers, automated data capture and big data.

The PCBS assumed a position among the leaders of the international statistical community, most importantly through its active membership in the High Level Group on Partnership, Cooperation and Capacity Building, as well as through addressing the important issues of the sustainable development through its publications, reports and on-line databases.

When I come to Ramallah, to Palestine and to the PCBS, I feel being among the best friends, I feel as being a member of a big family. Therefore, let me to wish, sincerely, all those who worked hard on preparing this Festival, those who are gathering for this celebration of statistics a successful and memorable Data Matters Festival.