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**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
AFFAIRS**

OPENING STATEMENT

International Forum on Migration Statistics

Paris, 15 January 2018

(To be delivered by Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, Statistics Division, DESA)

OECD Secretary-General, Mr. Angel Gurría,
IOM Director-General, Mr. William Lacy Swing,
Excellencies,
Distinguished experts,
ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first International Forum on Migration Statistics.

I am very pleased that this forum is a joint initiative of three entities that have a strong track record on migration: the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), under the spirit of “working together and delivering as one.”

According to our latest estimates, the global number of international migrants reached 258 million in 2017. While the number of international migrants is growing faster than the global population, migration is still a rare event: migrants represent 3.4 per cent of the world’s population.

Our latest estimates also revealed that “South to South” migrants outnumber “South to North” migrants, and that developing countries host a large majority of refugees.

These examples demonstrate the critical role of data in debunking myths and commonly held misperceptions. Accurate information and evidence is critical to inform national and global migration debates.

This, I believe, is the core mission of this two-day forum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The recognition of the contribution of migrants and migration to sustainable development was a major leap forward in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda also raises the profile and importance of migration statistics.

The collection of data to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is first and foremost a responsibility of national statistical offices and agencies.

I therefore welcome the participation of national statisticians in this Forum.

My Department stands ready to support your efforts by strengthening national statistical systems to produce, disseminate and analyze migration-related data and indicators.

Dear colleagues,

On 19 September 2016, the UN General Assembly committed to develop, by 2018, two global compacts, one for safe, orderly and regular migration and one on refugees.

In all thematic and regional consultations, Member States and stakeholders have highlighted the paucity of migration data and the urgency of improving the evidence-base. Clearly, the preparation of the two global compacts is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve migration-related statistics.

To assist Member States in the negotiations, DESA, IOM and OECD prepared a set of recommendations to improve data on safe, orderly and regular migration.

Dear participants,

This Forum brings together a diverse group of experts, researchers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines – statistics, economics, demography, sociology, geospatial science, and information technology.

Together, you will explore innovative ways to measure human mobility, to produce real-time migration statistics, and discuss strategies to fill in data gaps to better understand migration dynamics.

I wish you a very fruitful discussion over the next two days.

Thank you.
