

## Statistician-General's Keynote Address on the World Statistics Day (WSD)

### Celebrations 2020

#### Theme: Connecting the World with Data we Can Trust

1. Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen it is an honour and pleasure to be here with you all on this special occasion of the 2020 World Statistics Day. I thank you all for taking out time to celebrate this occasion with us today, those of you present physically and those joining virtually. A day like this for the global Statistical System, is one where we take out time to celebrate ourselves and the particularly important work we do. The World Statistics Day celebrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October every 5 years provides us an opportunity to highlight and raise awareness of the vital role statistics plays in the world we live in today. So, let me on behalf of the Nigerian statistical system, start by wishing the National Statistical System in the country and indeed across the globe, a happy world statistics day.
2. The theme for this year's celebration, ***Connecting the World with Data we Can Trust*** is quite significant. Our world today is much more connected than it has ever been in its history. Be it economically, socially, or even culturally, every nation is inter-linked in one way or the other. The extent of this global connectivity and the importance of statistics was further highlighted recently by the COVID-19 pandemic. A virus which started in Wuhan, a City in faraway China, was able to spread globally within 3 months, shutting down the economies of almost every country. With this continuous interconnectivity and the associated important role of reliable data and statistics in this development, it is therefore appropriate that we highlight and bring it to the fore.
3. Up-to-date, reliable, timely and trusted data are necessary to understand the changing world in which we live. Statistics are critical for evidence-based policymaking across all sectors and all societies,

regardless of their cultural and historical backgrounds or level of economic growth and development.

4. The existing Coronavirus pandemic has raised the importance of statistics and demonstrated how linking data to geospatial information can help us to track the dynamics of a rapidly changing global situation. National Statistical Systems across the world are saddled with the responsibility of producing and disseminating in more user-friendly way, timely, relevant, and accessible data to inform national development planning and monitoring. This task, which is inherently challenging, is further exacerbated by inadequate funding, making it difficult for statistical systems especially in less developed countries to adequately fulfil their mandate. Tackling this problem requires a better understanding of the new data ecosystem, the role of the Statistical System in this changing data ecosystem, as well as the need for having a robust and responsive system. Therefore, we need to ensure that our statistical system is well equipped to produce the much-needed reliable information to inform policy and decision making in a timely fashion. Accordingly, investing in data and statistics is a wise investment, as it is the only way in which we will be able to make the decisions needed to respond and recover from the present impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and get back on track to deliver on our various growth and development objectives and aspirations.
5. The need for investment in data and statistics is further enhanced by a fast-changing data ecosystem which is expanding to include new data sources, new data producers, and a rapidly expanding set of data users. Furthermore, technology and big data are transforming our economies and the way we conduct our activities. All these changes are driving up the demand and appetite for data and with it the importance and costs of producing data in a timely fashion. Adequate capacity is thus required to understand this changing demand for data, the production processes involved, as well as the application of it. Accordingly,

national statistical systems across the globe are faced with the need to ensure the capacity to effectively coordinate this new expanded statistical system to ensure that the essential principles of good statistics are maintained in this new and rapidly evolving environment.

6. In Nigeria, the national statistical system as coordinated by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), fully recognizes its role in this new changing environment. Over the past few years, as a system, we have worked tirelessly to meet up with the ever-growing demand for statistics and the statutory mandate placed on us as the apex and national statistical agency as well as the coordinator of the National Statistics System. This has been done often within exceedingly difficult financial constraints and sometimes, in a politically sensitive environment. While we recognise and accept that we are not where we want to be yet, we can however, hold our heads up in the knowledge that we have made significant strides and improvements in many areas of our work which has been recognized both locally and internationally.
  
7. We have fully institutionalized enhanced electronic data collection systems, switching from using paper questionnaires for data collection to using GPS enabled Computer Assisted Personnel Interviewing System (CAPI) devices for all household data collection. This has proved to be more efficient in providing better data quality that can be trusted for policy making. In addition, we have established a new Real-Time Data Monitoring and Quality Assurance System for the purpose of remote monitoring of our field data collection. With the use of such technology which is sometimes supported with satellite imagery, we are now able to monitor and track the movement and activity of enumerators on the field real-time. This system has been utilized for major important projects like the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-5) in 2017, the National Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2018/2019, the ongoing National Business Sample Census (NBSC). It

will also be used for the National Agriculture Sample Census scheduled early next year amongst many others.

8. We have also enhanced our capacity for Computer Assisted Phone interview systems, partnering with the telecommunications operators to take advantage of the huge number of mobile phones owned by Nigerians to get very quick information on households in situations where data is needed quickly and where our field workers have restrictions in movement. This has particularly been helpful during the excising pandemic and enabled us to keep working during the lock down period and the need for social distancing.
9. We have also enhanced our data dissemination strategy by revamping our website which now hosts a refurbished electronic-Library (e-Library), receiving millions of hits and downloads of our reports annually. Working with partners, we created and launched a brand-new portal for disseminating COVID related data, and another online trade database to easily access and disseminate trade related statistics. All these were done while improving our online presence through social media for better engagement with our users across the world. We have also improved data visualizations in our dissemination and reporting process. towards making data easily understandable and accessible to data users
10. At the same time, we have worked hard at methodological improvements in our data production processes to ensure our processes are adopting the latest methodology and processes. This has been done with the aim of ensuring that information produced measures up to set standards internationally, while at the same time addressing any local peculiarities. Some of methodological reviews initiated and completed in recent years cover areas of National Accounts estimates, Labour Force statistics, Consumer Prices, and International Merchandise Trade statistics and many more. **We are also working with relevant stakeholders in the system on an initiative**

called the Geo-Referenced Infrastructure and Demographic Data for Development (GRID-3). This is aimed facilitating the production, collection, use, and dissemination of high-resolution population, infrastructure, and other reference data points to support our national and sub-national development priorities. On completion, this project will significantly enhance our sample selection procedures, streamlining it and making it much more robust in its coverage, thereby further improving the quality and precision of the data we produce.

11. Furthermore, we have increased our coordination and technical cooperation and collaboration with other members of the National Statistics System at the Federal and States levels as well as with international development partners to carry out projects covering various facets of our socio-economic life. One novel example is our collaboration with the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which resulted in the conduct of the first ever nationwide surveys on Corruption and another on Drug use, one of the first for any African country. Others include various General Household Panel Surveys, the Multiple Indicator Surveys and the monthly COVID monitoring survey to measure the socio-economic impact of Covid on households and many others. Such collaboration and cooperation have also been extended to the sub-national statistical offices. We are not only supporting them to increase the quantity of data and statistics they produce and disseminate at that level, but also ensuring that the production processes and methodology meet the set standards and principles of official statistics. This, without a doubt, will contribute significantly to the development and growth of the economies and social and development conditions in their relevant states.

12. All these reforms, improvements and changes carried out over these years were done with the sole aim of providing users with information that is reliable and relevant to their work and decisions; and a production process that enjoys the trust and confidence of the users.

All our reports carry a detailed methodology section that outlines the production processes as well as appropriate data sources. We also routinely invite independent monitors to observe our procedures and activities both on the field and analysis stage. That way they gain a better understanding of how we work and more confidence in our output.

13. As earlier stated, we acknowledge that there remains some way to go in achieving our mission and vision as an organisation and a system. Significant challenges remain due to several bottlenecks hence the need for more investment in the system. Just like any productive and efficient structure, the nature of investment required must be on a continuous and sustainable basis, and not on a one-off basis. Efforts by government and all relevant stakeholders should be synergized and harmonised in a way that allows the uninterrupted flow of resources required by the statistical system to satisfy the demands of the policymakers. The system in turn, must ensure that it conducts its activities and processes in a manner that is transparent and accountable to the users, adhering to the basic principles and tenets of official statistics as enshrined in the United Nations Statistics Charter. In so doing we can have a statistical system that generates the trusted data needed to support global connectivity and linkages.
  
14. On this note, I would like to say thank you once again for taking time to be part of this special occasion. I am optimistic that by the next celebration in 2025, as all stakeholders work together to support the Statistical System in Nigeria in its quest to achieve its mandate, the system will become the envy of others in Africa and indeed the world.
  
15. I will end by saying as I always do that if we do the right things at the right time and for the right reasons, Nigeria will attain its much acknowledged potential and one of those right things is getting our statistics right.

16. Thank you for your kind attention and I wish you all a Happy World  
Statistics Day Celebrations.