

Celebrating World Statistics Day

Message from Hon. Minister of Finance, Dr. Ashni K. Singh, M.P.

I am particularly honoured to issue the following Message on the occasion of today's global observance of the first WORLD STATISTICS DAY. In his letter of 14th July to His Excellency the President and all other Heads of Government worldwide, the Secretary-General of the United Nations brought to their attention General Assembly Resolution 64/267 in which the Assembly decided to designate 20th October 2010 as World Statistics Day under the general theme of 'Celebrating the many achievements of official statistics and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism'.

The General Assembly further invited Member States, organisations of the United Nations System and other international and regional organisations as well as civil society to observe World Statistics Day.

The activities being mounted today by the Bureau of Statistics and other statistical units of Government are a clear manifestation of this Government's continuous policy support to the area of statistics and a further deepening of that commitment in a clear and ready response to the invitation of the United Nations General Assembly.

I have noted the Secretary-General's expressions of extreme satisfaction with the efforts made in many countries in recent years to strengthen their statistical capacity under the leadership of the national statistical office and, in particular, in such areas as the population and housing censuses and the monitoring of the progress of the MDGs.

Guyana can certainly associate with these sentiments expressed by the Secretary-General. In fact Government has not only been unstinting in its support for Statistics but has manifested this commitment in very tangible ways. During the period 2005 to 2009 Government, with the support of key development partners, invested over US\$4.5 million in building capacity in the Bureau and establishing and strengthening statistical units in several of the social sector line ministries.

Capacity building in Statistics is a long-term commitment and Government's support for statistics is unequivocal and for the long term.

Already we have seen results of such investment. The new series of Guyana's National Accounts and Consumer Price Index which were introduced in January of this year based on the results of a well executed Household Budget Survey executed in 2006 constituted a monumental piece of work by the staff at the Bureau. For these major achievements, I heartily congratulate the Bureau.

This first World Statistics Day, and the second Caribbean Statistics Day celebrated just a few days ago on 15th October, fall within the year which marks the Census year for several Caricom countries.

In giving due recognition to the work and achievements of official statistics through the celebration of a World Statistics Day, the Director of the United Nations Statistics Division made the very pertinent observation that a key source of official statistics is the population and housing census which provides governments and the public with valuable data on the size, structure and characteristics of their population.

As of 1st October this year 106 countries and areas had conducted a census in the 2010 round with another 117 scheduled to do so.

Guyana, as one of the founder Members of the Caribbean Community, has been unwavering in its support for the organisations and instruments that give meaning to a Caribbean Community.

Among these are the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians and the decennial Population and Housing Censuses conducted under the coordinated role of the Caricom Secretariat.

I am aware that the Standing Committee will be convening in just three (3) weeks' time and Guyana, through the Bureau of Statistics, will be fully involved at that meeting in charting and managing the course of regional statistics over the next calendar year.

I am aware that several Caricom countries have proceeded with their national Censuses this year, with others scheduled to do so during 2011. In keeping with the ten-year cycle, and the last Census having been held in 2002, Guyana will be conducting its next national Census in 2012.

This decision reaffirms Government's unwavering commitment to the regional Census process given the plethora of information that such a process will provide and is needed for the region to firmly establish the process of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

No Government in today's world can function effectively without access to the quality of statistics that the practitioners in the official statistics system strive on a daily basis to produce.

In fact, in many instances, not only in Guyana, their work is met with criticisms, sometimes skepticisms. However, critics lose sight of the important fact that a statistical system is both a user as well as a producer of statistics. It is first a user before it can produce and if it were physically possible to do a check in several cases, avid critics may well turn out to be among the most recalcitrant in the submission of data as required by law.

In fact in his message to mark Caribbean Statistics day last Friday the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community noted inter alia that as a downside to the work of the national statistical offices, 'these offices faced as they are with an increasing demand for data are experiencing high non-response rates from data providers'.

Thus it is really a most commendable gesture by the UN General Assembly to give to the statistical systems worldwide and the staffers who work within these systems the type of recognition that is long overdue by the observance of this particular day 'World Statistics Day' which today and henceforth will be observed on the 20th of October each year and will take its place alongside other important observances of the United Nations such as 'World Food Day, World Health Day, World Teachers' Day, World Aids Day', to name a few.

I am pleased, on behalf of the Government of Guyana, to join with the rest of the world in celebrating this first World Statistics Day.