

## Closing Remarks

**Dr. Takanobu Nakajima, Director, Statistics Commission Office, Cabinet Office, Japan:** It is my privilege to bring this remarkable symposium to a close. It has been heartening for all of us to see such prominent leaders from the United Nations Statistics Division and the statistics departments of Australia, China, Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States make comprehensive presentations and develop deep discussion as participants to this symposium. I am encouraged by your willingness to share and openly discuss actions, experiences and challenges to construct a desirable statistical system. Our working together across countries in this way I believe will be a definite step to a perfectly designed and globally harmonized official statistics system in the world.

As the promotion of globalization and expansion of market economies, we can say that it is time to reconsider the role of the official statistics. Under the centralized system or planned economy, official statistics would be an essential information source for the government to impose legal controls on firms and households. The optimal structure of statistics could be obvious to everyone. In modern society, where a variety of people with different cultural backgrounds join the market from anywhere, anytime, the substantial need for the official statistics seems ambiguous. Market participants may urgently request the precise information on the current situation of the global economy. They cannot wait for the lag public announcement of official statistics and may not even rely on their numbers. Households, on the other hand, are just curious about what is happening to themselves and their neighborhoods, although they mostly receive the benefit from the market economy. Ask their jobs and income levels as the respondents to statistical surveys, they would say, "Leave me alone; that is not your business." To hear today's presentations and discussion, I think we need another concept of official statistics for the 21st century, which could be expressed as the following phrase: Statistics help and support successful and peaceful individual life and business.

This concept makes sense if we compare official statistics to a medical examination. That is essential to find something wrong in organs and remain in good health. However, just taking an examination may not be sufficient because the numbers in diagnostic sheets are all Greek to most of us. Medical science shows what kinds of examination should be taken and how to interpret the results. By the same analogy, official statistics without social science may be difficult to illustrate a prescription to the desirable government policy. Scientific knowledge may play an important role as a guide post to the optimal structure of official statistics that makes a great deal of contribution to everyone's welfare.

Ladies and gentlemen, all the people in this room, I believe, are heading for the same destination: making statistics better. To reach the goal, we should now gather wisdom from a variety of people. Not only professionals but also ordinary people like businesspersons, students and even children and make them interested in statistics. We hope that this symposium will be the beginning of a brilliant history of the reform and international collaboration of the Japanese official statistics in the 21st century. I now declare the 2007 ESRI International Symposium formally closed. Thank you very much.