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**DIVISION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

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**Opening Statement**

Expert Group Meeting on  
“2014 United Nations e-Government Survey:  
e-Government as an Enabler of Collaborative Governance”

United Nations  
New York, 4-5 December 2012

Distinguished experts,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address such a well-known group of worldwide scholars and experts in the field of e-governance development. On behalf of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all of you for taking the time to be here in New York to attend this important Expert Group Meeting. Its purpose is to serve as a forum for discussion of key e-government issues in support of the preparation of our upcoming flagship publication entitled “2014 United Nations e-Government Survey.” As you may know, this publication, which contains both a review and analysis of major trends and issues, as well as indicators that assess the readiness of all 193 Member States in the area of e-government, has become a major reference for international and regional organizations around the world, as well as for strategic thinkers and policy makers at the national level. I am pleased to share with you that it is among the top ten most visited publications on the UNDESA website, among the over 400 publications that are produced every year by our Department and that it has been utilized and quoted in numerous prominent publications. It also serves as an important tool for capacity-building as it provides relevant information to Member States about their e-government development thereby enabling them to take stock of their achievements and gaps. There is an increasing understanding that the United Nations should provide best available evidence and practice in the field in order to assist Member States to formulate a holistic development framework. Data and information is required to inform evidence-based decisions and policy options on how to fight poverty, how to arrest climate change and how to ultimately promote sustainable development, peace and security.

As you may know, the United Nations e-Government Survey is produced every two years, however, its preparation and update presents numerous challenges, especially with reference to the e-government development assessment. First, while UNDESA welcomes the recommendations of Member States to improve its methodology and assessment criteria, it must also be very careful and mindful of ensuring that the advice is integrated in a balanced way, so as not to favour, or appear to favour, a specific country over others. Therefore, one of the challenges is that of maintaining our neutrality and impartiality vis-à-vis Member States while being responsive to their concerns and suggestions. Second, because ICTs and their application advance at a very rapid pace, UNDESA's challenge in this respect is on the one hand, to ensure that the United Nations e-Government Survey and the indicators utilized keep up with these changes and are properly reflected and, on the other hand, to guarantee continuity in the approach and methodology employed so that the assessment maintains similar indicators across time in order to allow for comparisons over the years. This also requires balancing new elements while preserving the core of indicators for the e-government development assessment. Third, UNDESA is faced with the challenge of how to best assess countries with large populations and the ones with small populations. This presents a challenge for which I would welcome your advice and recommendations. Fourth, the challenge is to ensure that while introducing new and emerging issues, the assessment continues to adequately capture diverse degrees of development across regions of the world.

Finally, and as custodian of the United Nations programme on public administration, allow me to highlight that public administration today is at a crossroads and that e-government development can play a critical role in this respect. Governments across the globe need to transform their systems, institutions, processes and human resources. Otherwise, they will be unable to meet the complex and multi-faceted challenges of our times. Governments must engage in more innovative ways of delivering public services, organizing the way they function and deploying their resources. They must do more with less; be more accountable, transparent and open; and favour greater participation of citizens in public decision-making and service delivery. In times of multiple crises requiring holistic responses, governments need to innovate how they

respond to multi-faceted challenges. Whereas in the past, governments worked in silos with little coordination among departments, today there is a growing awareness that whole-of-government approaches are required to solve complex, multi-faceted problems to ensure concerted action at all levels.

The application of ICTs in government, greater investments in telecommunication infrastructure coupled with capacity-building in human capital can provide formidable opportunities to transform public administration into an instrument of development at the service of its citizens. By adopting the new paradigm of 'open government,' governments can restore citizens' trust in public institutions making them more accountable and transparent, and ultimately helping reduce corruption.

I trust that over the next days you will be able to tackle some of these critical issues and provide your recommendations and advice in support of the 2014 United Nations e-Government Survey for our consideration. Thank you.