Statement by His Excellence Ambassador Carlos Duarte, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations, at the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services; the United Nations Children’s Fund; the World Food Programme; and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

03 June 2016

Afternoon topic: Big Data and the Sustainable Development Goals

Madam President,

Brazil recognizes the importance and potential of big data in contributing for statistical analysis in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as discussed by previous speakers.

Experiences using big data for the described purposes, however, are still at a preliminary stage. In considering the possible extension of these experiences, the following should, in our view, be kept in mind.
First, the ownership of data. This arises particularly when partnering with private companies – including telecom, IT companies and Internet companies that keep large databases on people’s activities. The issue here is, ultimately, who controls the data and the implications this may have on the regularity of the supply of data and also on the right to privacy.

Second, the ethical dimension is also relevant, particularly when collecting behavior and social data, and when making inferences based on those. More than being objects of data collection, people should have a voice in the design of these policies.

Third, the need to strengthen national statistical offices. The possibility of using big data is very important, but should not overshadow the need to strengthen these offices and their capacity to produce statistics regularly, since continuity is key. For such strengthening, other measures – perhaps less sophisticated than those needed to deal with big data – can be taken, such as addressing the needs of funding and training at the national level, particularly in less developed countries.
Brazil looks forward to continue this discussion, in the context of the broader process taking place in the High-Level Group for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda.

Thank you very much, Madam President.