

**LAUNCH OF RESULTS OF CENSUS 2001
TREVOR A MANUEL, MINISTER OF FINANCE
UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA, 08 JULY 2003**

Mr President

Colleagues

Distinguished Members of the Statistics Council

Dear Friends

For some reason, elephants have been very much in the news lately. In Africa stories of elephants abound,

- It is said, that an elephant is a difficult animal to describe, but if you encounter it in the veld, there would be absolutely no doubt that it was indeed an elephant encountered;
- Similarly, it is said that the only way to eat an elephant is over a long time, there is so much of it and it takes a while to digest.
- Besides this, we know that the gestation period of an elephant is about 22 months.

Today we receive the elephant, hard to describe but we know what it is; there is so much of it, it will be eaten over a long time and digested over an even longer period. And, it has been in gestation for almost as long as an elephant.

The difference in time – the results of Census 2001 have been completed in a record time of 21 months since 10 October 2001, when 100 000 enumerators visited every South African household – is a result of the enormous effort of every person who was involved in the compilation of the Census and of the technology choices made.

The release of the results today need to be seen in perspective – Census 2001 sought information on 74 variables, the results of all the variables are made available today. Seen against the release times of censuses elsewhere, even in highly industrialised countries, which all tend to have much larger statistical bureaux, this is a significant achievement.

Also, seen against the background of only the second-ever full country census undertaken in South Africa, the achievement is even more remarkable.

The results of Census 2001 will add to the rich tapestry of democracy still being woven in our country. It confirms the improvements in the quality of life of the poorest of our people and it draws attention to the enormity of the challenges which still confront us. Moreover, it retains the information in the Geographic Information System, allowing us to plan into the future and measure progress at the level of detail in each of the 80 000 enumeration areas, each comprising roughly 150 households. The quality of information, and the extent of its geographic disaggregation places South Africa in a very unique position.

The presentation of the information today comes at the end of an enormously complex logistical operation – an operation which covered the recruitment and training of enumerators and their supervisors, their mobilisation into the field, their remuneration, the collection of the almost 12 million questionnaires of 12 pages each, its transport, storage, processing and ultimately the data analysis. In an operation as complex as this, glitches are almost inevitable – problems with the payment system for enumerators; threats of strike action as contracts ran out; costs of technology choices; the risks of using leading edge technology – we all know much more about white light and blue light; the leaking roof at the processing centre; and even now, in the final stages the

unforeseen visit of President Bush which competes for newspaper space. At times, it appeared that all the planets were aligned against the delivery of the elephant calf.

Before I invited His Excellency, President Mbeki, to receive the results on behalf of government, I had to call the Statistics Council into action. Council members spent hundreds of hours working through the results and debating the contents before concluding, as they do in their Statement today, " Council recommends to the Minister that he support the release of the results of Census 2001". I want to express my sincere appreciation to Dr Southall and every member of the Council for placing me in the position to receive the results with confidence because I know that no effort was spared to ensure the correctness of the results.

During Census 2001 Stats SA also received invaluable advice and technical assistance from the USA Census Bureau and from Stats Sweden. Stats SA also had an opportunity to work very closely with other SADC countries to ensure that similar core questions would be asked in all countries during the census round in SADC between 2000 and 2002. The information emanating from all of these censuses will provide a strong basis in the future for data comparisons and integration. In your discussions with other African Heads of State in Maputo this week, Mr President, we would be pleased if you would share with them the view that the African Union, in its construction, requires a strong base of comparable and integrated data, and that the interactions in SADC on the Census round has made a valuable contribution.

Mr President, I would now invite you to receive the results of Census 2001 from the Statistician-General, Mr Lehohla and, would you kindly address the gathering thereafter.

Thank you.