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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Sixty-third session

(Geneva, 16-18 September 2002)

(Item 2 of the provisional agenda)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF
THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (ECE)**

Note by the secretariat

1. The fifty-seventh session of the Commission took place from 7 to 10 May 2002. The full proceedings can be found in document E/2002/37-E/ECE/1395.
2. The ECE Spring Seminar on Labour Market Challenges in the ECE Region was held on 6 May 2002. The Chairman of the Commission highlighted among other conclusions the need to address the problem of ageing in the ECE region and to monitor the progress made following the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, April 2002) and the upcoming Ministerial Conference on Ageing (Berlin, September 2002).
3. The Executive Secretary of ECE underlined some of the implications of the discussion at the Spring Seminar for the work of ECE. For instance, geographical mobility having been identified as a supporting factor for employment, it was envisaged that the Human Settlements sub-programme of ECE would further develop its work on social housing and housing policy to facilitate such workers' mobility. As a regional commission, ECE could also have a role to play in tracking the problem of ageing. Moreover, despite its limited resources, ECE could focus on a very narrow niche of migration. However, all these issues required a different approach: global, regional, national, as well as local. The ECE could give more focus to the local level, as local development was relevant for the creation of small and medium-sized businesses, reducing unemployment and improving the well-being of an ageing population.

4. The need for ECE to be actively involved in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, August-September 2002), the Ministerial Conference on Ageing and the World Summit on the Information Society was also stressed.

5. The chairpersons of the principal subsidiary bodies were invited to look closely at their work programmes in the context of security and safety. This would provide a basis for a cross-sectoral examination of the challenges and potential threats to security that pertained to ECE work. The Executive Secretary was encouraged to continue to monitor this aspect of the activities of the Commission.

6. The Executive Secretary recalled that the Secretary-General had launched an initiative to continue the process of strengthening the Organization in the light of the United Nations Millennium Declaration's principles and priorities. To involve ECE member States as early as possible in the process, the ECE secretariat had prepared a self-assessment document for information and comment. In particular, the document suggested including the social dimension of growth and increasing policy dialogue and support to policy-making in the Commission.

7. The Commission welcomed the opportunity to discuss the proposals set out in the self-assessment document. It believed that further discussion was needed on important matters such as: introducing more policy dialogue, the social dimension and security issues in the Commission's work programme, reforming the ECE intergovernmental structure, strengthening the role of the annual session and the Bureau, as well as the proposed orientation of technical assistance and operational activities.

8. The ECE Steering Group recommended that:

- The principal subsidiary bodies and the Divisions concerned should present their work to member States once a year, possibly during the annual session;
- The theme of the annual session should be selected following consultations between the ECE Bureau, the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, the principal subsidiary bodies and the secretariat.

9. The member States made the following proposals:

- The Steering Group could play a more important role and meet as an integral part of the annual session;
- For the annual session, a brief formal document should be prepared by each principal subsidiary body outlining its accomplishments, problems and challenges. The document should also provide information on its structure and that of its subsidiary bodies, as well as the rate of participation by member States. In addition, where relevant, it should describe the status of the main ECE conventions and agreements together with the number of ratifications and accessions.