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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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Paris, 13-15 June 2006  
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

MEETINGS OF THE PARENT BODIES OF THE CES

Matters arising from the February 2006 Session of the Economic Commission for Europe

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The 2006 annual session of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was held in Geneva from 21 to 23 February 2006. This note provides an overview of the main outcomes of the session, highlighting the implications that are relevant to the Conference of European Statisticians and its programme of work.

Several issues of interest to the Conference were discussed at the session. The following were the main substantive agenda items:

- a) The UNECE Reform – the way forward;
- b) Preparation of the strategic framework 2008-2009;
- c) Technical cooperation activities of the UNECE.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The annual session of the ECE defines the overall directions of work of the ECE. It intervenes for arbitration among sub-programmes in the case of major additional activities or resource changes and addresses new issues or demands that cannot be handled by the existing Sectoral Committees (earlier called Principal Subsidiary Bodies) of the ECE, of which the Conference of European Statisticians is one.
2. Any possible follow-up to the matters arising from the February 2006 session of the Economic Commission for Europe will be reflected in operational terms with the UNECE Statistical Programmes for 2006 and 2007.

## II. THE UNECE REFORM – THE WAY FORWARD

3. The Commission noted that the General Assembly welcomed the work plan on the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) reform adopted by the Commission on 2 December 2005 and decided that the UNECE should implement the adopted measures outlined in the decision E/ECE/1434/Rev.1.

### A. UNECE governance structure

4. The Commission adopted the revised Rules of Procedure for the Commission and the revised Terms of Reference provisionally (pending the endorsement of the revised Terms of Reference by ECOSOC).
5. An Executive Committee is set up to implement the overall guidance set by the Commission and to act on behalf of the Commission in between its biannual sessions. The chairs or vice-chairs of the Sectoral Committees will be regularly invited to the meetings of the Executive Committee. The Commission adopted the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Executive Committee.

### B. Priorities of the UNECE programme of work

6. The adopted work plan for reform included the following recommendations on the subprogramme on Statistics:
  - (a) the coordination of international statistical work, the methodological work and technical cooperation activities shall be strengthened;
  - (b) in order to provide Member States with user-oriented statistics, the Conference of European Statisticians shall submit proposals to the Executive Committee on the actual production of Member States statistics. The contents of the online database shall be reviewed and improved accordingly;
  - (c) the functioning and accessibility of the online database shall be improved in order to facilitate the dissemination of statistics;
  - (d) the publication of “Trends” is discontinued. The production of other publications shall be reviewed by the Conference of the European Statisticians which will submit proposals to the Executive Committee;

(e) the resources allocated to the processing of data by this Subprogramme shall be reduced due to the overall reduction of activities in the field of economic analysis.

7. The following general recommendations of the work plan also concern the work of the UNECE Statistical Division:

(a) in order to contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the ECE shall offer a platform for improving the coordination of these activities and for sharing information, views and experience between all stakeholders. The UNECE will set up and maintain a database on MDG indicators using the database and dissemination infrastructure of the Statistical Subprogramme. In this work, the ECE shall cooperate with UNDP to this extent and within existing resources;

(b) the ECE shall pay particular attention to the gender dimension of development, as a priority cross-cutting theme, by identifying good practice in further mainstreaming gender issues in its various subprogrammes and activities, taking into account the economic areas addressed by the regional Beijing+10 review.

C. Implementation of the reform

8. Under this item, the chairs/vice-chairs of the Sectoral Committees briefed the Commission on the implementation of the ECE reform within their sectors, also outlining existing and planned cooperation with partner organizations and highlighting the achievements and challenges in their respective subprogrammes. Katherine Wallman represented the Conference of European Statisticians. She drew attention to the challenges ahead within the context of an enlarged Europe and emphasised the good cooperation between the major partners in statistics in the UNECE region: UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations.

9. The Commission reiterated the importance of implementing the reform as agreed by the Commission on 2 December 2005 and thanked the representatives of the Sectoral Committees for having outlined how the reform would be implemented in their respective Committees. The Commission also stressed the importance of intersectoral activities among the Committees so as to promote a more coherent UNECE and requested the Committees to pursue and look to strengthen such activities and approaches.

10. The Commission thanked the representatives of partner organizations for their expressed readiness to cooperate with UNECE. The Commission stressed the importance of exploring new areas for cooperation and applying different cooperation patterns as appropriate. It also noted specific proposals in respect of strengthening cooperation with other regional commissions.

D. Organizational changes in the secretariat

11. The Commission took note of the new organizational structure presented by the UNECE Executive Secretary. It noted with satisfaction that the redeployment exercise had proceeded smoothly and that it would be implemented before 1 April 2006. The Commission requested that member States be informed of any further measures, in particular regarding staff deployment and mobility, through the Executive Committee.

12. Issues relevant to the work of the Conference:

- (a) the new governance structure of the UNECE may have its implications on the Conference's interaction with UNECE and its Executive Committee;
- (b) the need to continue the good cooperation between the UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations;
- (c) the changed organizational structure of the UNECE and the reduction of the human resources of the UNECE Statistical Division by three posts (one Professional and 2 General Service posts) has its implications on the UNECE Statistical Programme, especially concerning the work on the macroeconomic database. In addition, two posts were redeployed within the Statistical Division;
- (d) following the recommendations of the work plan, the UNECE Statistical Division is carrying out an external evaluation of its gender and macroeconomic databases.

### III. PREPARATION OF THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR 2008-2009

13. In compliance with the UN programme planning process, the UNECE secretariat prepared the draft strategic frameworks for 2008-2009 of all its subprogrammes. The frameworks were discussed by the Sectoral Committees, or their Bureaux, and submitted for review by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW). The subprogramme on statistics was approved by the CES Bureau at its October 2005 meeting.

14. Under this item, the Commission adopted the UNECE strategic framework for 2008-2009, including the subprogramme on statistics (Annex 1).

### IV. TECHNICAL COOPERATION

15. The Commission emphasized the importance of technical cooperation for implementing the UNECE's core activities and noted that the General Assembly has underlined the need to strengthen the links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the work of the regional advisers, including the Regional Adviser in statistics.

16. The Commission also took note of the technical cooperation being carried out with subregional country groupings and urged the secretariat to continue to reinforce such cooperation. The Commission welcomed the approval of concrete projects and project proposals by the special session of the SPECA regional advisory committee held after the international conference on subregional economic cooperation in Central Asia and the future role of SPECA. The Commission also welcomed the increased cooperation with other organizations.

17. The Commission noted that the activities of the Regional Adviser in Statistics were concentrated on assisting economies in transition in the implementation of international statistical standards and statistical capacity building. The UNECE technical assistance during 2005 was provided to the CIS member countries and the Balkan countries. A detailed list of the activities is provided in Annex 2.

18. Issues relevant to the work of the Conference:
- (a) the need to continue to reinforce cooperation with subregional country groupings and to cooperate with other international organizations in providing technical assistance;
  - (b) the strategy for coordinating technical cooperation in UNECE region was approved by the CES Bureau at its February 2006 meeting (see document ECE/CES/2006/3 for the CES 2006 plenary session);
  - (c) the project document “Strengthening the Statistical Capacity of Central Asian Countries To Monitor the Progress toward the Millennium Development Goals” was approved by the UN Headquarters.

V. DRAFT DECISION BY THE CONFERENCE

19. It is proposed that the Conference:
- (a) take note of the new governance structure of the UNECE and the role of the Executive Committee;
  - (b) continue the good cooperation between the UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations;
  - (c) note that the reduction of the human resources of the UNECE Statistical Division will have its implications on the UNECE Statistical Programme 2006, especially concerning the work on the macroeconomic database;
  - (d) welcome the external evaluation of the gender and macroeconomic databases of the UNECE Statistical Division;
  - (e) continue to reinforce cooperation with subregional country groupings and to cooperate with other international organizations in providing technical assistance;
  - (f) approve the strategy for coordinating technical cooperation in UNECE region as described in paper ECE/CES/2006/3.

## ANNEX 1

UNECE Strategic Framework (biennial programme plans) 2008-2009

## Subprogramme Statistics

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**Objective of the Organization:** To improve the reliability of national official statistics and ensure their comparability at the international level, and to play the central coordination role for the international statistical activities undertaken in the region.

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**Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat****Indicators of achievement**

(a) Further developed national institutional frameworks and corresponding implementation practices of member countries, in line with the UNECE Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.	(a) (i) Number of countries ensuring better compliance with the Fundamental Principles through revision of their national statistical legislations; (ii) Number of UNECE recommendations implemented to improve national institutional frameworks for official statistics.
(b) Increased development of internationally recommended standards and practices to ensure comparable statistics.	(b) (i) Number of new or revised statistical standards and recommendations endorsed by a statistical authority to which the UNECE has contributed in substance; (ii) Number of statistical areas in which the UNECE undertakes substantive methodological work.
(c) Streamlined activity patterns of statistical work between international organizations through elimination of overlaps and gaps.	(c) (i) Percentage of joint activities in the ECE statistical programme undertaken in cooperation with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat), Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS (CIS-STAT) and other international organizations; (ii) Number of international organizations regularly reporting their activities in the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work programmes.
(d) Increased availability of reliable, timely and comparable macroeconomic, social and demographic statistics, particularly about the less advanced countries of the region.	(d) (i) Number of countries that provide good quality data for the UNECE statistical database; (ii) Percentage of users that express, through user surveys, satisfaction with the quality, coverage and timeliness of data contained in the UNECE database.

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## I. STRATEGY

1. The main objective of the statistics subprogramme is to preserve the UNECE's position as a key player in international statistics. The role of coordinating all international statistical activities in the region will remain the key element.
2. In order to be a credible coordinator, the Statistical Division has to prove its expertise in all relevant types of statistical activities, i.e. data work, methodological work (incl. organization of meetings), and technical assistance. The Subprogramme will maintain a high level service to National Statistical Offices. The activities will concentrate on a carefully selected number of niches in different subject areas, particularly those where the UNECE can provide an added value and complement the work undertaken by other international organizations. The public access to all meetings' documents, work programmes and statistical standards and recommendations will provide the basis for transparency and accountability.
3. The Statistics Subprogramme will address horizontal and general issues of official statistics. It will promote the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics within the international statistical community, providing advice to countries on institutional frameworks of official statistics, monitoring the implementation of Fundamental Principles, and adhering to them for all UNECE statistical activities.
4. The methodological work will be focused on outputs in the form of standards, guidelines and leading practices, including the advice on UNECE standards, and follow-up work for their implementation at the national level. The technical cooperation will focus its activities on key priorities, reflecting the needs of countries, like assistance and monitoring in the field of population censuses, development account project for Central Asia, training activities for less developed countries of the region, etc. The data work undertaken by the Statistical Division shall respond to a sustained internal and/or external demand. Data will be accessible to the public as statistical products in electronic form.
5. The cooperation with the statistical departments of other international organizations will continue in the form of joint meetings aimed at coordinating the development of methodologies and the preparation of standards, recommendations and publication of best practices. The data sharing through joint questionnaires and coordinated data collection will be further developed.

## ANNEX 2 (Extract from document E/ECE/1440/Add.1)

UNECE technical cooperation activities in 2005

<b>Statistics</b>		
Venue	Activity	Recipient
Albania	Advisory services during the Eurostat/UNECE global assessment of the statistical system of Albania, Tirana, 28 February - 4 March and 9-11 May	Albania
Finland	Advisory services during the expert group meeting on human rights indicators, Turku, 10-13 March	UNECE member countries
Georgia	Advisory services to the State Department of Statistics on the revision of the law on official statistics, Tbilisi, 9-15 October	Georgia
	Advisory services to the State Department of Statistics on population statistics, 19-22 December	Georgia
Kazakhstan	Advisory services during the International conference on strengthening sub-regional economic cooperation in Central Asia and the future role of SPECA, Astana, 24-27 May	SPECA member countries
	Advisory services to CIS countries during the WHO-CARINFONET meeting on MDG-related and other health indicators, Almaty, 28-30 September	CIS member countries
Serbia and Montenegro	Advisory services to UNMIK on the population census, Pristina, 16-20 October	UNMIK
Luxembourg	Advisory services during the 7 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU Management Group on Statistical Cooperation with EU candidate and Western Balkan countries, Luxembourg, 14-15 March	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Advisory services to the State Statistical Office on the revision of the State Statistics Act, Skopje, 30 May-2 June	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Republic of Moldova	Advisory services on the measurement of non-observed economy in national accounts, Chisinau, 16-18 November	Republic of Moldova



Russian Federation	Consultations with Rosstat on the methodology of industrial production indices in the Russian Federation and with CIS Statistical Committee on mutual cooperation, Moscow, 29 August - 2 September and 8-17 December	Russian Federation and other CIS member countries
	Advisory services to the Federal Migration Service and the Federal Service of State Statistics on international migration statistics, Moscow, 5-7 December	Russian Federation
Ukraine	Advisory services on the measurement of non-observed economy in national accounts, Kiev, 13-16 November	Ukraine

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