

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

First Meeting of the 2004/2005 Bureau
Washington, D.C. (United States), 18-19 October 2004

REPORT OF THE 18-19 OCTOBER 2004 BUREAU MEETING

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The first meeting of the 2004/2005 Bureau was held in Washington, D.C. on 18-19 October 2004. The following members of the Bureau attended: Katherine Wallman (Chairman), Milva Ekonomi, Dennis Trewin, Luigi Biggeri, Vladimir Sokolin, Irena Krizman and Svante Öberg. The following permanent participants also attended: Pieter Everaers (Eurostat) representing Michel Vanden Abeele, Ivan Fellegi (OECD Statistics Committee Chair), Enrico Giovannini (OECD), Mikhail Korolev (CISTAT), Paul Cheung (UNSD) and Heinrich Brünger (ECE). The following persons attended at the invitation of the Bureau: Rob Edwards (IMF), Shaïda Badiëe and Misha Belkindas (World Bank) and Hubert Escaïth of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Andrey Kosarev of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (Russia), James Whitworth of Eurostat, Béla Prigly of Statistics Canada, Suzann Evinger of Office of Management and Budget of the United States, Louis Kincannon, Dawn Haines and Jay K. Keller of the US Census Bureau. Tiina Luige of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

II. UNECE Statistical Programme

Documentation: (CES/BUR.2005/3, Add.1 and Add.2)

2. The Bureau acknowledged the progress of work according to the UNECE annual Statistical Programme for 2004. It was agreed that the final report on the implementation of the 2004 Statistical Programme will be made available on Internet after the end of the year. It will not be discussed as a separate item at the Bureau meeting in February 2005.
3. The Bureau reviewed the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2005. Three activities were decided last year to be phased out during 2004-2005: robotics; demographic projections; and registers and administrative records for social and demographic statistics. An additional activity proposed to be terminated in 2005 is energy statistics. The work on the Millennium Development Goals may be extended provided that there will be support from other organizations (e.g. UNDP). In this case, the proposal will be presented to the Bureau meeting in February 2005.
4. Concern was raised about energy statistics. The problems related to the quality of energy statistics, data gaps, impact of privatisation on the provision of data, etc. are becoming a significant issue internationally. IMF is making a review of energy statistics where some test results will be available in a few months. UNSD is also beginning a process to investigate the situation in energy statistics. Energy statistics will be discussed at the next meeting of the UN Statistical Commission: it was recommended that the UNSC discussion focus on "a way forward" in this area. However, as the UNECE involvement in the area is very marginal, the termination of this activity in the UNECE Statistical Programme 2005 will not have an impact on the international situation.
5. The Bureau pointed out that the aim of the UNECE work on the Handbook of Official Statistics and its role vis-à-vis the "Profiles of National Statistical Systems" maintained by UNSD is not clear. It was

recommended to wait until the UNSD publishes the Profiles – a compendium of brief descriptions of all national statistical systems worldwide, planned to be available on Internet at the end of November. After that, the UNECE will reconsider its activities in this area. If UNECE will undertake any work on the Handbook, it should be a part of a concentrated effort on UNSD level.

6. A common concern was raised with regard to the indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The availability and quality of data in this area is not sufficient. Many countries are not able to report on the indicators. To overcome the lack of data, international organizations are putting a lot of effort into producing their own estimates. There have been some positive results in this area concerning the cooperation on international level and a joint effort by international organizations. However, it is not clear how much countries have benefited from this exercise for their statistical capacity building. The developing countries need much more help to produce the data. Often, supplying data on MDG indicators is a commitment shared by UNDP, the World Bank and the national government, and the role of the statistical office as the core of statistical programmes is not recognised.

7. A global report on MDG by the UN Secretary General including a statistical annex will be prepared for the 2005 summit. The report is expected to be ready by March 2005. The Bureau considered it important to use the report as an opportunity to highlight the problems with MDG reporting and to put the political spotlight on statistical capacity building as a prerequisite for being able to provide good information. The report should include a statement highlighting the quality (or lack thereof) for the indicators. It might also include a “foreword” by a representative group of chief statisticians. Information about indicator availability and concrete recommendations for improving the data on MDG indicators should be in the report. The data problems can be indicated without undermining the credibility of the SG’s report. It is strategically important to get support for improving the quality of indicators from the participants of the 2005 summit (who are not statisticians). It was also decided to discuss the report at the Bureau meeting next year (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

8. After the 2005 summit, we must take stock of data collection methods and quality and bring country statistical offices back to the center of attention. It was suggested to organize in 2006 a meeting on follow-up of statistical indicators related to MDG involving policy makers. MDG indicators could also be discussed by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA).

9. It was considered desirable to have a review of the capacity of countries to report on the MDG indicators in a sustainable way as part of official statistics. A UNECE report on the situation in UNECE member countries would be very timely in this respect (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

10. Concerning the implementation of the CPI manual, the question was raised whether it is too soon to carry out a user feedback survey on the manual, which was published very recently. However, the content of the survey has not yet been determined. The aim is to find out where countries have the most difficulty in implementing the new manual, which can only be done when the implementation is in progress.

11. The need for a further prioritisation within the work programme and a clear orientation to users was pointed out. Mr. Brüngger explained that the overall reduction in the number of activities is done from the viewpoint of prioritisation, that is to concentrate resources on fewer activities where substantial input can be made instead of spreading resources over a number of activities where the involvement can only be marginal.

12. Eurostat informed that it is reviewing its policy on the relations with non-EU countries. This can also have an impact on UNECE technical assistance activities. OECD informed that they might terminate their activities in agricultural statistics and will not be involved any more in the Task Force on rural development statistics.

13. The Bureau endorsed the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2005 subject to the comments above.

14. The Bureau considered the note to be submitted to the UNECE Group of Experts on the Programme of Work on the biennial programme plan for 2006-2007. It was recommended to include a reference to launching activities on the implementation of fundamental principles for international statistical organizations and to focus more on goals and priority areas (e.g. MDG indicators, good institutional arrangements) (**action by UNECE secretariat**). The note was approved subject to the comments above.

III. Review of the classification of statistical activities used in the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work (IP)

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/4

15. A new classification of statistical activities to be used in the IP was presented to the Bureau. It was prepared by a Task Force consisting of UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and Statistics Canada.

16. The new classification was developed with the assumption that the first three major headings could be used as a basis for developing the classification for data in the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standard. Therefore, it is desirable to have the highest degree of coherence with the SDMX classification. However, the main purpose of this classification is to present the statistical activities of international organizations in the Integrated Presentation and not to aim at a worldwide classification.

17. The classification will be tested on the 2005 IP and conversion keys will be developed between the new classification and the old classification and the statistical programmes of UNECE, Eurostat and OECD. Short explanatory text will be added to programme elements, explaining to users which areas are covered under each topic. The Bureau approved the classification subject to small amendments to some programme elements (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

IV. Review of the Rapporteurs' reporting regime and the selection of topics for the in-depth review of the IP in February 2005

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/5

18. The Bureau considered the proposal prepared by UNECE on how to improve the Rapporteurs' reporting regime.

19. The Bureau agreed upon a simpler and more flexible procedure of Rapporteurs' reporting. It was decided to review about 5 Programme Elements each February based on their priority. The aim is not to cover all topics within a certain time period. The Heads of offices will be consulted at the CES plenary session in order to obtain their opinion on which topics need to be reviewed. Based on the replies, the UNECE secretariat will make a proposal to the October Bureau for the selection of topics (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

20. The Rapporteurs will be selected together with the topics on a case-by-case basis. It was recommended to involve countries and Steering Groups as much as possible in the reporting. It is important to get the perspective of both the international organizations and countries in the report. It will be decided separately for each Rapporteur report whether it will be made available on Internet.

21. The Rapporteur reports should focus on issues dealing with coordination and gaps in international statistical work, not so much on the content and priorities of the work which are dealt with in other groups. The reports should include a 1-page executive summary. The reporting should also be coordinated with the reports on particular topics considered at the UN Statistical Commission, in order to avoid duplication. If applicable, they should include a short summary of the implications of the discussion at the UNSC for the UNECE region.

22. The Bureau selected the following statistical areas to be reviewed at the February 2005 meeting:

- (i) Technical cooperation (PEs 1.3 and 1.4 according to the old classification, 5.8 in the new classification) – Rapporteur: Eurostat;
- (ii) Migration statistics (part of old 4.1 and part of new 1.1) – Rapporteur: United States in cooperation with IMF and the World Bank;
- (iii) Income and consumption (part of old 4.7.1, new 1.5) – Rapporteur: Canada;
- (iv) Labour statistics (old 4.4, new 1.2) – Rapporteurs: Italy, ILO;
- (v) Transport statistics (old 3.4, new 2.4.4) – Rapporteurs: Denmark, European Committee of Ministers of Transport.

23. Another topic requiring attention is the Human Resources Development and Training. It was decided to consider this issue as a separate topic during the Bureau meeting in February 2005. Sweden, Netherlands and Slovenia were mentioned as potential countries who could prepare a paper to be the basis for discussion.

V. Presentation of the statistical activities of the World Bank

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/6

24. Ms. Shaida Badiie presented the statistical activities of the World Bank. An overview of the main products and services and of the overall strategy of work was given. The World Bank collects and disseminates a wide range of development data, both economic and social, from global aggregate to household level. The data are extensively used for the Bank's internal analysis (e.g. for income classification, debt analysis, monitoring) and disseminated through statistical publications, official documents and research reports.

25. Important parts of the work are technical assistance, training and advisory services and statistical capacity building. The Bank's strategy is to build sustainable national capacity in developing countries, allowing them to break out of the vicious cycle: low quality of output caused by inadequate resources which in turn reduces the demand and funding for statistics. Procedures are in place to support short-term and long-term needs of statistical capacity building. The work attempts to increase demand and country ownership of statistics and make the statistical development a key part of national plans.

26. Other strategic directions are to respond quickly to meet short-term needs of policy makers (Millennium Development Goals, International Development Association, etc.) using the existing data and to contribute to the strengthening of international statistical systems. The Bank's statistical work has benefited from the Action Plan on Managing for Development Results (the so-called Marrakech Action Plan) where statistics are an important part. Six key areas are to be addressed at both the international and national levels: mainstream strategic planning to support national statistical developments, begin preparation for the 2010 population census, increase financing for statistics, set up an international household survey network, improve MDG monitoring by 2005 and increase accountability of the international statistical system.

27. The Bureau thanked the World Bank for the very interesting and informative presentation. It was agreed that next year in October Eurostat will present its statistical activities (**action by UNECE secretariat and Eurostat**).

VI. Issues and problems related to social statistics

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/7 and Add.1

28. Concern has been expressed that not enough is being done to improve progress in social statistics at international level and that the area is not sufficiently covered by international standards and definitions. In the discussion, the Bureau aimed to identify practical steps forward to improve international work on social statistics.

29. There was general agreement that it is not realistic to try to develop an overarching conceptual framework of social statistics. There is a long list of heterogeneous topics and the attempts to bring these into a common framework have not been successful in the past. The institutions responsible for social policies in countries are heterogeneous, therefore it is difficult to find a strong group of stakeholders interested across the board.

30. There is also a high degree of fragmentation at the international level. Many specialised international agencies deal with social statistics and often statistical agencies are not part of the work. International organizations have their own standards, there is no systematic approach and no overview of standards in social statistics. The UNECE secretariat is ready to act as a bridge between specialised agencies and national statistical offices using the fundamental principles of official statistics as an umbrella.

31. It is crucial to identify the key variables in social statistics and try to achieve international comparability on these. Developing countries with very limited resources need guidance in deciding which areas are the most critical.

32. The Bureau agreed that progress should be made in a practical way, focusing on empirical data, and not waiting for a big theoretical breakthrough. The program should be modest and realistic; for example, a small number of countries might work together on a voluntary basis, developing common modules for surveys. The results can then be used for cross-country analysis. Some good practices from education, health, social expenditure and migration can be used as a basis.

33. A possibility is to use the opportunity of the EU social statistics directors meeting and to organise a back-to-back joint meeting on social statistics hosted by Eurostat and UNECE (**action by UNECE secretariat and Eurostat**). Countries could identify beforehand the potential modules and surveys for cooperation, e.g. 4-5 domains of significant interest, from which the meeting could select 1-2 domains to include in household surveys in countries. The EU has some surveys that include harmonised modules. This experience could be used in other countries. Australia and Canada expressed willingness to collaborate in this respect. They will inform the Bureau about progress in the work (**action by Australia and Canada**). It was pointed out that the EU experience might not be applicable in all countries because of the specific EU standards.

VII. Seminar on Measurement of Sustainable Development: what is the role of official statistics

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/8

34. Sweden presented the outline for the seminar on Measurement of Sustainable Development to be held at the 2005 CES plenary session. Four sessions are proposed: (i) the role of official statistics; (ii) case studies; (iii) analytical tools; (iv) future needs of statistics. The following comments and recommendations were made:

- the overall aim of the seminar and what needs to be achieved should be made clearer;
- focus on what is the use of indicators, how they should be linked to policies and engage some policy makers to give a presentation;
- consider conceptual frameworks, major impediments to progress and the recommended steps for further development;
- session (i) should address more policy issues, such as the division of work between statistical offices and policy users;
- reverse the order of sessions (ii) and (iii);
- include information about the Eurostat SESAME project (although it is currently stopped);
- limit the title of the seminar to "Measurement of sustainable development";
- make available references to background documents well in advance of the Conference.

35. Eurostat, OECD and UNSD expressed their interest to contribute to the seminar. It was also suggested to ask for contributions from Germany and the Netherlands.

36. Sweden will identify the Session Organizers and will circulate a more developed proposal to the Bureau before its February 2005 meeting for electronic discussion. The papers should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat by mid-March at the latest to allow for translation and timely distribution (**action by Statistics Sweden and UNECE secretariat**).

VIII. Seminar on improved data reporting

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/9

37. United States presented an outline for the seminar on Improved Data Reporting to be organised during the 2005 CES plenary session. The outline includes four sessions: (i) best practices in electronic reporting using the Internet; (ii) other avenues for electronic reporting; (iii) cognitive and usability testing and marketing in support of Internet and other electronic reporting options; (iv) reducing respondent burden. The following suggestions were made by the Bureau:

- with the current structure of sessions, there is a risk of receiving papers which are too technical and thus of no interest to the management of statistical offices;
- another option would be to structure the seminar according to different areas of application: (i) business surveys and (ii) population census and social surveys;
- the seminar should touch on the key issues of improving the data collection from a statistical office's policy perspective to attract the interest of top management, e.g. what is the role of the statistical office vis-à-vis the other public organizations, focus on policy issues for which the tools can be useful, distinguish between primary and secondary data collection;
- to relate the topic to the coordination of statistical work in countries and e-government issues;
- to involve academic experts on designing Internet based forms and on their testing for the session on cognitive and usability testing;
- to consider the negative priorities and administrative burden on enterprises in member countries;
- the session on respondent burden should consider whether the electronic reporting option is decreasing or, on the contrary, increasing costs and what are its implications for different respondent groups;
- to deal in session (iv) with the issues related to working with administrative agencies and sharing data;
- to explore the possibility of inviting a contribution from the CODACMOS consortium (a meeting held in Bratislava 7-8 October 2004, more information on <http://www.codacmos.eu.org/>).

38. The issue of data reporting to international organizations was also discussed. However, the Bureau felt that the seminar might lose focus when including these problems. It is a set of issues on its own and could merit a separate seminar.

39. Other possible contributors to the seminar were suggested: Canada - on EDR from businesses; Germany, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands and Slovenia – on respondent burden; and UNECE - based on the pilot survey on the use of e-services in national statistical offices. Sweden will not prepare a paper on session (i) but will contribute in some other way.

40. The United States will reformulate the proposal and circulate it to the Bureau for electronic discussion within the next month (**action by United States and UNECE secretariat**).

IX. Progress report of the MNE project

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/10

41. The Bureau reviewed the progress in the project on measuring the activities of multinational enterprises (the MNE project). The project is in Phase 1, the aim of which is to gain insights into the forms of organization, ownership and control of multinational enterprises. The data collection has started in the five participating countries (Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands and United Kingdom) and is

progressing fairly well. The preliminary results show that there are often significant discrepancies in the view the multinational enterprises have of themselves compared with the view the statistical offices have through their national practices and definition of statistical units. It is planned to consolidate the results of national coherence analysis among participating countries. The analysis could permit the identification of the best data sources and define practices to improve the quality of data collected from the MNEs. This kind of information is especially important for small countries where the discrepancies can lead to serious mistakes.

42. The project's framework for data sharing and confidentiality is a good example that can be followed for other similar kinds of activities. These questions are relevant also for other statistical agencies: e.g. Slovenia has established a working group with neighboring countries to consider the questions of data exchange between national producers, the Nordic countries are investigating the feasibility of exchanging information on businesses between statistical offices of their countries.

43. The Bureau encouraged the continuation of the project.

X. Report of the Task Force on Statistical Confidentiality and Microdata

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/11

44. As a follow-up to the Seminar on Confidentiality and Microdata in 2003, a Task Force is developing international principles on the provision of access to microdata. A first draft of the principles was presented to the CES 2004 plenary session and made available on the UNECE web site for comments. Mr. Dennis Trewin, Chairman of the Task Force, presented to the Bureau an updated draft reflecting the various comments. The discussion focused on the issues where there was not a general agreement but a range of different opinions expressed by countries.

45. Mr. Trewin emphasised that the principles by themselves are not enough. They have to be accompanied by a set of guidelines on how to implement the principles and examples of good practices.

46. According to the fundamental principles, "individual data collected by statistical agencies ... are to be used exclusively for statistical purposes". Various views have been expressed on this issue due to the different interpretation of "statistical purposes". It was considered important to make a distinction between statistical and administrative uses. In the case of statistical use, individual data are used as an input to compiling information about a population. An administrative use concerns decisions about a particular person or enterprise and can bring benefit or harm to the individual.

47. There was an agreement that most appropriate is the interpretation in para 42 (b) "microdata could be used for research purposes using statistical models, analysis and data based on microdata". Statistical purposes can have a different meaning for researchers and official statistics, especially when researchers have access to other data collections and can use data matching techniques. Therefore, the paper needs to break down the issues of statistical and research use into more detail, e.g. concerning matching techniques, linking of files, different types of research. The decision as to whether researchers' access is in accordance with statistical purposes should be left to countries but the document could provide some guiding criteria that would help to decide in the case of conflict.

48. On the question of equality of access by researchers, the general opinion was that equality of access is not compromised when the rules and procedures of allowing access to microdata are uniform and transparent. An ethics committee or a similar arrangement can be useful in helping to decide on the access rights in the case of conflict of interests. Different approaches are used in countries and the area is often regulated by law, which the statistical offices have to follow. A problematic area is access to census microdata, which may require the establishing of special rules and advisory groups.

49. Concerning informed consent, the distinction was made between active and passive consent, that is, between only informing the respondent and obtaining explicit agreement for the use of data. This should

be transparent to the respondent. The question of consent is linked to the definition of statistical purposes; if this is extended to cover statistical use by researchers, the issue of consent is no longer relevant (such an approach could perhaps be considered in future). Another way to tackle the question could be to redefine who is considered an employee of the statistical office and thus allowed access to microdata.

50. There was a proposal that the public use files (PUF) should be considered earlier in the paper to make the distinction between these and other kinds of microdata. With PUF, the main problem is secondary disclosure. No 100% guarantee for avoiding disclosure can be given. There should be reasonable balance between the measures taken for confidentiality protection and the risk of disclosure. Certain countries support some form of obligation to protect confidentiality by the researcher in the case of PUFs, while in other countries these are publicly available. It would be desirable to have a stocktaking of different approaches in countries.

51. Whether access to microdata by international researchers and international agencies is allowed depends on legislation in individual countries. The question is how to enforce across borders the reprimand for researchers who have breached confidentiality. However, it was pointed out that this should not be treated differently from breaking any other kind of law. Some countries are not looking at individual researchers but decide about the access rights based on the nature of the institution of the researcher in question.

52. The related question is how to deal with research access by international organizations. It was suggested that the paper should also consider this topic and give some guidance to international organizations for better controlling access to microdata. There is currently a legal void in this area.

53. Concerning engaging researchers as deemed employees, there was a suggestion that it could depend on whether their work creates a public benefit. However, this raises the question of who decides what is beneficial for the public. A better approach can be to use furthering the objectives of the statistical office as a criterion. This gives more flexibility to the statistical office in making the decision.

54. Not all differences of opinion can be resolved in the paper. The different approaches depend on the culture, legislation and the capability of implementing the confidentiality protection measures in countries. Therefore, a degree of flexibility in the implementation should be allowed.

55. Other comments that were made during the discussion include:

- general data protection laws in countries sometimes overrule the provisions of the statistical law. The consequences could be explored more in case studies;
- some countries have defined a category of particularly sensitive variables in their general data protection law – to consider how the law influences access to these categories;
- not focus only on “academic” research, as there are also other kinds of research, e.g. research by policy analysts, government officials, market research, etc.

56. The Task Force will prepare a new version of the document for the Bureau meeting in February. It is planned that the principles will be presented to the Conference for endorsement in 2005 (**action by Dennis Trewin, Chairman of the Task Force**).

XI. Review of the work of various Steering Groups and Task Forces working under the auspices of the CES

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/12

57. The UNECE secretariat reported on the review of the teams of specialists working under the auspices of the CES in order to bring them in line with the Guidelines approved by the Conference (CES/2004/8). 19 teams of specialists are currently working: 6 Steering Groups, 6 Task Forces and 7

Organising Committees. In the light of the Guidelines, some of them were reclassified. This concerned mainly Steering Groups being changed into Organising Committees when the objective of work was to organise a Work Session or a Seminar. The detailed information about the groups is available on Internet: <http://www.unece.org/stats/ToS.html>. It was pointed out that it would be desirable to have this kind of information available also at a global level.

a. Population and housing censuses (CES/BUR.2005/12/Add.1)

58. The Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses is developing recommendations for the 2010 round of population censuses. The work is progressing according to schedule. The preliminary results of the UNECE questionnaires on the 2000 round of censuses will be presented at the Work Session on Population Censuses (23-25 November 2004).

59. The following comments were made in the discussion:

- it is desirable to provide input to register based censuses;
- there is a potential to gain more value-added from the population census through exchange of data between countries;
- a question was raised as to whether there would be a permanent capacity for census monitoring. Migration and the place of usual residence are topics requiring special attention;
- there are no standards for annual population estimates, although they are very important for calculating the per capita figures, electorates, etc.

b. Management of information technology (CES/BUR.2005/12/Add.2)

60. The UNECE secretariat presented the preliminary results of the pilot survey on the role of national statistical offices in e-services. In general, the Bureau was in favour of organising a full-scale survey. The topic is relevant and the results could be useful. However, more clarification is needed as to who will use the results and for what purpose. The survey questionnaire should be simplified, translated into Russian and sent also to other international organizations. OECD has worked on similar questionnaires in other domains; they could cooperate in designing the questionnaire and in involving the OECD countries. The Bureau asked the Steering Group to come up with a proposal for the questionnaire after considering it at the April 2005 meeting and before launching a full-scale operation (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

c. Proposal for the creation of a Steering Group on Health Statistics (CES/BUR.2005/12/Add.3)

61. A joint UNECE/Eurostat/WHO expert meeting (May 2004, Geneva) recommended to set up a Steering Group and a Task Force on health statistics. The groups should work toward the development of a new common instrument to measure health status and to coordinate with existing groups such as the Eurostat Group on HIS and the Washington Group. The Bureau reviewed the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Steering Group and the Task Force.

62. Mr. Paul Cheung informed the Bureau that an Intersecretariat Working Group is being set up in health statistics. The involvement of WHO in the group is somewhat problematic as they do not accept the authority of the UN Statistical Commission. However, WHO is ready to cooperate on a case-by-case basis depending on the issue under question. It was pointed out that there is a better cooperation with WHO at the regional level, e.g. as demonstrated at the joint UNECE/Eurostat/WHO Meeting on Health Statistics (24-26 May 2004, Geneva).

63. Since the TOR focus on the measurement of the population health status, the Bureau decided that the groups should be called a Steering Group and a Task Force on measuring health status. The groups should also liaise with the IWG on Health Statistics, once it is set up. The Bureau approved the TOR of the Steering Group and the Task Force subject to the comments above (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

d. Statistical Dissemination and Communication (CES/BUR.2005/12/Add.4)

64. The draft TOR for the creation of the Steering Group on Statistical Dissemination and Communication were circulated for electronic comments to the Bureau members in July.

65. There was general agreement that work in this area is needed. The Bureau noted that the Group should clearly play the role of a Steering Group, focusing on priority areas, setting up Task Forces on priority topics from the list and thinking about the mechanisms to obtain specific outputs. OECD expressed the wish to join the Steering Group and to be a co-organiser of a meeting. IMF is also interested in the work. Eurostat would cooperate in specific Task Forces, depending on the topic. The TOR were approved by the Bureau.

XII. Follow-up to decisions taken by the Bureau

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/13

66. The UNECE secretariat is maintaining a document on follow-up to decisions taken by the Bureau to help in identifying possible delays and in deciding on further action. The attention of the Bureau was drawn to some areas where decisions needed to be taken.

67. Concerning its organization of work (para 9), the Bureau did not find it necessary to set up an electronic discussion group on Internet. The documents should be circulated at least two weeks in advance of the meetings to allow Bureau members to consult with their staff. Electronic discussion via e-mail (sending the comments to all Bureau members) was deemed sufficient. It was considered important to keep a record of all comments received (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

68. It was decided to remove from the list the Task Force on the Handbook of Official Statistics (para 12) as the further work on that is not yet clear. No special actions by the Bureau are required concerning the International Comparison Programme (para 18) as the issue is dealt with in other fora. (**action by UNECE secretariat**)

69. With regard to the problems related to environment statistics (para 26), the IWG meeting in October did not discuss the issue as the agenda had been set up earlier. The IWG needs some flexibility in reacting to the CES request. There will be a programme review paper on environment statistics dealing systematically with these issues for the UN Statistical Committee meeting in 2006.

XIII. DATES AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

70. The next Bureau meeting will take place on 10-11 February 2005 in Geneva.

71. The plenary session of CES will take place on 13-15 June in Geneva with the following schedule: 13 June, Monday - the first seminar; 14 June, Tuesday – the second seminar; 15 June, Wednesday morning – the formal business part. The Bureau lunch meeting can be organised either on Monday or Tuesday. The OECD Statistical Committee meeting will take place on 15 June, Wednesday afternoon and 16 June full day.

72. The 2005 October meeting of the Bureau was tentatively scheduled to 24-25 October. It was recommended to fix the tentative dates for the 2006 meetings in February 2005 (**action by the UNECE secretariat**).

73. The Bureau expressed concern about the timing of the DGINS meeting (in May) as it is too close to the CES plenary session and the OECD Statistical Committee meeting. Eurostat took note of the concern.

XIV. POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR FUTURE SEMINARS AT THE CES.

Documentation: CES/BUR.2005/14

74. The Bureau reviewed the list of possible topics for the CES seminars. The list will be circulated to countries in spring 2005 in order to obtain their preferences for the 2006 seminar sessions.

75. It was decided to keep on the list the discussion topics a, b, c, d, e, h (including r), k, o and u. The topic 'implementation of fundamental principles' (topic n) should be merged with 'the relationship between statisticians and policy makers' (topic a).

76. The Bureau recommended adding short explanatory notes to the titles to outline what is expected to be considered under the topic. The list should make clear whether the topics belong to emerging issues or foundational issues. The updated list will be circulated for electronic discussion before the next Bureau meeting (**action by UNECE secretariat**).

XV. OTHER BUSINESS

77. The Bureau agreed to make available on Internet all documents of the meeting.

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