



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

CES/2004/1  
8 April 2004

Original: ENGLISH

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**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Fifty-second plenary session  
(Paris, 8-10 June 2004)

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FEBRUARY 2004  
SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

Note prepared by the Secretariat

**SUMMARY**

The 2004 annual session of the Economic Commission for Europe was held in Geneva from 24 to 26 February 2004. This note provides an overview of the main outcomes of the session, highlighting the implications and the follow-up, which 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) Policies to stimulate competitiveness and growth;
- b) The UNECE Reform;
- c) The UNECE cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE);
- d) The work of the UNECE: achievements, constraints and perspectives;
- e) Preparations for, and follow-up to, global and regional conferences;
- f) Overview of UNECE technical cooperation activities.

## 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 case of major additional activities or resource changes and addresses new issues or demands that cannot be handled by the existing Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) of the ECE, of which the Conference of European Statisticians is one.

## ISSUES DISCUSSED AT THE COMMISSION SESSION OF RELEVANCE TO THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

### The UNECE reform

2. The Commission considered this agenda item on the basis of documents prepared by the ECE secretariat as a follow-up to similar discussions held in 2002 and 2003. The Chairman of the Commission also tabled two proposals: one on the conduct of an external review of the UNECE and another on adjustments to the programme planning process.

3. The Commission noted that, given the enlargement of the EU and the new geopolitical reality within the region, the role and place of the UNECE in the new European institutional architecture needs to be reviewed, in order to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in the new European context. In line with these views and taking into account the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in support of the current United Nations and Economic Commission for Europe reform exercises, and building on the recommendation of the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW), the Commission decided to commission a comprehensive report on the state of the UNECE with the aim of developing recommendations to determine what changes to the role, mandate and functions of the UNECE are necessary in light of the changes in the European institutional architecture since the UNECE was created almost 60 years ago. The report should be guided by the will of member States to avoid duplication, and ensure cooperation, complementarity and efficiencies among intergovernmental organizations.

4. The Commission endorsed the actions proposed by the secretariat, as well as the recommendations proposed by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work, as follows:

With regard to intergovernmental structures<sup>1</sup>,

- (a) The Annual Session will discuss adjustment of the intergovernmental structure at the Commission level if any eligible body proposes it;
- (b) The Principal Subsidiary Bodies (PSBs) of UNECE will review biennially their intergovernmental structure, including related advisory groups, and report to the Commission at its Annual Session.

With regard to evaluation of the work of the Principal Subsidiary Bodies,

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<sup>1</sup> The intergovernmental structure of the ECE is composed of: (a) the Economic Commission for Europe (member countries represented by Geneva missions to the UN and/or officials of Ministries of Foreign Affairs in capitals) and its Group of Experts on the Programme of Work (GEPW); (b) the Principal Subsidiary Bodies (member countries represented by line Ministries) that created in specific areas; and (c) standing Working Parties created within each PSB.

- (c) The Commission endorsed the proposals on best practice for evaluation as outlined in the report of the GEPW, namely that “the PSBs should play a key role in the evaluation process of the activities of the UNECE”. Therefore, the Group of Experts recommended that all PSBs put in place steps to evaluate their programme of work/activities on a biennial basis. Such a frequency will fit in with the budget cycle. The PSBs should present a report about the steps taken following the results of the evaluation to the Commission at the end of every evaluation cycle.

With regard to the priority setting mechanism for technical cooperation activities,

- (d) The Commission endorsed the proposals by the Group of Experts to facilitate the implementation of technical cooperation priority setting. With regard to the PSBs it was recommended that each PSB, at its annual session, identify the priority areas currently under-funded and should inform the Group of experts through the secretariat.

*Issues recommended to be followed by the Conference*

5. The following conclusions of the Commission could be considered:

- Review biennially its intergovernmental structure, including any teams of specialists acting under its guidance;
- Evaluate its programme of work/activities on a biennial basis;
- Regularly identify the priority statistical areas, where the less developed statistical offices in the ECE region need technical assistance but are currently under-funded.

The UNECE cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

6. During the discussion on this topic, it was noted that already the 1997 UNECE Plan of Action stated that the UNECE should consolidate cooperation with the OSCE, which has a similar membership to the UNECE and a complementary mandate. Recently, the New Strategy Document of the OSCE provided the basis for a new and deeper relationship between OSCE and UNECE. An intersecretariat task force has been established that would prepare a detailed plan for cooperation on the basis of which a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organizations would be prepared.

7. The Commission welcomed the formalization of relations between OSCE and the UNECE. It was noted that the UNECE work with OSCE should be reflected in the UNECE’s programme of work for 2006-2007. In this context, it was stated that there is a need to review and prioritize the work of the Economic Analyses Division, including the Economic Survey.

*Issues recommended to be followed by the Conference*

8. The following conclusions of the Commission could be considered:

- The new relationship with the OSCE may have implications on the programme of work of the Statistical Division, in particular the provision of macroeconomic and other statistical data to

the Economic Analyses Division for the preparation of the Economic Survey of Europe. The possible implications will be reflected in the Annual Statistical Programme of the ECE Statistical Division.

#### The work of the UNECE: Achievements, constraints and perspectives

9. The Chairpersons of all PSBs were invited to participate in this session and make presentations on the work of their respective subsidiary bodies. Irena Krizman, Director General of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia and Vice-Chair of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians, represented the Conference.

10. The Commission considered this agenda item on the basis of the document prepared by the ECE secretariat "The Work of the UNECE: Achievements, Constraints and Perspectives". The Chairpersons/Vice-Chairpersons of PSBs made presentations focusing on the outlook and challenges ahead, in particular the impact of the EU enlargement on their work. A number of points were made during the discussion. It was noted that most of the PSBs had already reviewed their priorities and activities in the light of the EU enlargement. It was stressed that there is a need for higher involvement of countries from the CIS region, Central Asia and South East Europe in ECE activities. With a view to better planning the participation of delegates from member countries, it was proposed that a consolidated information on the schedule of meetings and seminars under all PSBs be provided at future Annual Sessions of the Commission.

#### *Issues recommended to be followed by the Conference*

11. The following conclusions of the Commission could be considered:

- Review the priorities and activities of the work of the Conference in the light of the EU enlargement.

#### Preparations for, and follow-up to, global and regional conferences

12. Under this agenda item, the Commission reviewed the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society held in December 2003 in Geneva. As a side event to the Summit, the ECE Statistical Division prepared, together with the UNCTAD, ITU, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, OECD and Eurostat, the Workshop on Monitoring the Information Society. The Commission agreed that the ECE secretariat should ask the United Nations Statistical Commission to take the lead in possibly organizing a regional ICT-related meeting on the monitoring of information society issues, in cooperation with relevant regional and international organizations, with UNECE participating as appropriate.

13. The Commission noted the success of the First Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development and looked forward to the debate within the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

14. With regard to follow-up to Beijing, the Commission endorsed the proposal to organize a UNECE regional preparatory meeting for Beijing +10 to take place in the last quarter of 2004, as was done in 2000.

*Issues recommended to be followed by the Conference*

15. The following conclusions of the Commission could be considered:

- The outcome of the regional meeting for Beijing +10 to be held in the last quarter of 2004 may have implications on the programme of work of the Statistical Division, in particular the work on gender statistics, and will be specified in the Annual Statistical Programme of the ECE Statistical Division.

Overview of UNECE technical cooperation activities

16. The Commission gave a positive assessment of the work done by ECE in technical cooperation and providing assistance to its less advanced member countries. The work of the Regional Advisers was highly appreciated, in particular in the areas of sustainable energy, environment, transport and statistics.

*Issues recommended to be followed by the Conference*

17. In reviewing the technical cooperation activities in statistics, particular attention should be paid to the following conclusions of the Commission:

- Technical cooperation should be focused on the countries most in need, should be demand-driven and result-oriented, and it should be carried out in accordance with the UNECE core sub-programmes of work;
- The need for more active consultations with the UNECE member countries in preparing Regional Advisers' work programmes;
- Technical cooperation activities need to be supported by additional resources and the secretariat was urged to undertake additional efforts for attracting extra-budgetary resources, in particular through involvement of the private sector as appropriate;

**DRAFT DECISION BY THE CONFERENCE**

18. The method of work of the Conference and its operating procedures are already largely aligned with those recommended by the annual session of the Economic Commission for Europe. However, the outcome of the session requires some follow-up by the Conference. Therefore, it is proposed that the Conference:

- Take note of the matters arising from the February 2004 Session and specified in this paper under "Issues recommended to be followed by the Conference";
- Agree that the Bureau of the Conference, the Conference itself and the secretariat of the Statistical Division should continue to work actively towards contributing positively to strengthening the ECE as an Organization;
- Ask the Bureau of the Conference to continue to review its intergovernmental structure, including any teams of specialists acting under its guidance, and report biannually to the annual plenary session;

- Ask the Bureau of the Conference to put in place steps to evaluate the programme of work of the Conference on a biennial basis and to report on the outcome of the evaluation to the annual plenary sessions;
- Ask the Bureau of the Conference to review regularly the activities in its programme of work and report on the outcome to the annual plenary session;
- Agree that the ECE Statistical Division should continue to be involved in technical cooperation activities through the Regional Adviser Programme and that the Statistical Division should seek ways of increasing its technical assistance through the Conference's regular meeting programme and its current regular budget and extra-budgetary resources;
- Agree that the ECE Statistical Division should regularly draw the attention of the members of Conference to those statistical areas, where the less developed statistical offices in the ECE region need technical assistance but are currently under-funded;
- Thank Eurostat for facilitating the participation of representatives of Central and Eastern European countries and of CIS countries in the annual plenary sessions of the Conference of European Statisticians and in selected other high priority meetings in the Conference's work programme.

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