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**UNECE BIENNIAL PROGRAMME PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 2006-2007
SUBPROGRAMME: STATISTICS**

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

INTRODUCTION

1. In December 2003 the UN General Assembly requested the Secretary General to submit to the Assembly, at its fifty-ninth session in 2004, a Strategic Framework for the biennium 2006-2007. The Strategic Framework would comprise Part One: Plan outline, reflecting the longer-term objectives of the UN Organization; and Part Two: Biennial Programme Plan. A major objective of the work on the preparation of the Strategic Framework is to improve the planning and budgeting process and to ensure that the UN becomes fully results-oriented and that the focus is on achieving results, and not just on the delivery of outputs.

2. The Biennial Programme Plan of the Economic Commission of Europe (ECE) will constitute the basis for the preparation of the next ECE programme budget. Therefore, the preparation of the Programme Plan has been carefully scrutinized by the Group of Experts on the Programme of Work of the Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva and the Budget Division in New York. Each subprogramme in the ECE Programme Plan follows a defined structure, including: objective, strategy, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement. The number of expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement was also defined using a narrow range of options to ensure consistency between the different programmes.

3. The process for preparing the Programme Plan was launched in February 2004 or about 20 months before the biennium, which is different from previous biennia when the planning process would start in October (12-14 months before the biennium). All ECE Divisions had to formulate their plans for 2006-2007, which was followed by a series of meetings and discussions within the ECE and with the respective responsible departments in New York. The ECE Biennial Programme Plan 2006-2007 will be submitted to the Committee for Programme Coordination at its session in June 2004 and to the UN Headquarters by the end of November this year.

4. The text that follows below includes extracts from the ECE Biennial Programme Plan and the programme plan for Subprogramme: Statistics. It is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians for information and possible comments.

OVERALL ORIENTATION OF THE WORK OF THE ECE¹

5. The Economic Commission for Europe is responsible for the Programme Plan.

6. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 36 (IV) of 28 March 1947, established the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and assigned to it responsibilities for coordination and promotion of international economic cooperation in Europe. Further direction to the programme is provided by the Declaration on the Strengthening of Economic Cooperation in Europe and its annexed Plan of Action, both endorsed by the Council in its decision 1997/224. Taking account also of the role of the regional commissions as set forth in Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, and the goals and commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation and the Monterrey Consensus, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the related Berlin Regional Implementation Strategy, the main objectives of the ECE work programme for the biennium 2006-2007 will be: (a) to promote the economic integration of ECE countries in the context of post-European Union enlargement, taking into account the various stages of development of ECE transition economies (accessing countries, emerging market economies and less advanced transition economies); (b) to foster sustainable development in the countries of the region, with a focus on promoting the conditions for sustained growth and trade, and improving the environment ; and (c) to contribute to the economic and environmental dimensions of security in Europe.

7. The overall ECE programme of work is designed around nine interdependent and complementary subprogrammes, namely Environment, Transport, Statistics, Economic analysis, Sustainable energy, Trade development, Timber, Human settlements and Industrial restructuring and enterprise development. The core strategy involves: the negotiation and implementation of conventions, norms, standards and guidelines; the promotion of dialogue in economic cooperation and development and the exchange of information and experience in the key areas of ECE work; the development of policy analysis, studies and supporting statistics; and the provision of technical assistance.

8. The ECE will bring about the further achievement of economic integration in the region as a whole, and in particular a closer cooperation between countries of the enlarged EU and

¹ At its annual session in February 2004, the Economic Commission for Europe decided to commission a comprehensive report on the state of the ECE with the aim of avoiding duplication, and ensuring cooperation, complementarity and efficiency among intergovernmental organizations. The report will be submitted to the next annual session in February 2005.

non-acceding countries, through its work in the further development and maintenance of norms and standards, with an emphasis on their implementation.

9. ECE will also contribute to reducing disparities and preventing the emergence of new dividing lines in Europe by promoting greater regulatory compatibility among ECE member States.

10. Technical cooperation activities will be carried out in accordance with ECE Technical Cooperation Strategy endorsed at the 2004 Annual session of the Commission. They will be streamlined and focused on South-East Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (in particular Central Asia and the Caucasus).

11. The economic and environmental dimensions of security in the region have been given a new impetus through the adoption, in December 2003, of the OSCE New Strategy Document where ECE is identified as a key partner for reviewing the commitments in their economic and environmental dimensions.

SUBPROGRAMME 3: STATISTICS

Objective of the Organization: To improve the reliability of national official statistics and ensure their comparability at the international level.

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 ECE Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(a) (i) Number of countries ensuring better compliance with the Fundamental principles through revisions of their national statistical legislations;

(ii) Number of ECE recommendations implemented to improve national institutional frameworks for official statistics;

(b) Increased implementation of internationally recommended standards and practices to ensure comparable statistics, particularly by less advanced countries in the region;

(b) (i) Number of new or revised statistical standards endorsed by a statistical authority, to which the ECE has contributed in substance;

(ii) Number of countries in the CIS and South-East Europe having implemented essential internationally recommended standards and practices in macro-economic, social and demographic statistics;

(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 OECD, Eurostat and other international organizations;

(ii) Number of international organizations regularly reporting their activities in the Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work Programmes;

(d) Increased access by users to reliable, timely and comparable macro economic, social and demographic statistics.

(d) Percentage of users that express satisfaction with the quality, coverage and timeliness of data delivered.

STRATEGY

12. The Statistics Division will review existing institutional frameworks (statistical laws) and major practices in member countries and will positively influence eventual revisions. It will use recommendations made through technical cooperation activities such as bilateral advice to countries and multilateral workshops and seminars to accomplish this objective.

13. The Subprogramme will continue to improve the comparability of official statistics in the ECE region. This will be achieved through reviewing and updating, jointly with other international organizations, the existing statistical standards and developing, when necessary, new ones. The provision of statistical assistance to the less developed countries in the region so that they can produce essential macro-economic, social and demographic statistics, including the indicators for achieving the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration, is also an integral part of the strategy. Furthermore, through the mechanisms established by the Conference of European Statistics (CES), the emerging needs of official statistics will be addressed collectively by all international organizations active in the region. For this to be achieved, it is essential that the coordination role of the CES vis-à-vis the statistical activities of international organizations such as Eurostat (the Statistical Office of European Communities), OECD, IMF, UNSD, CIS, etc. be maintained and further strengthened. Therefore, the ECE will continue to compile updated information on the statistical activities of the various international organizations and make it publicly available.

14. The ECE strategy in statistics also applies to the production and dissemination of internationally comparable statistical data on the ECE region with the aim of contributing to the public debate and decision-making process at national and international levels. Cooperation with other international organizations in collecting and sharing essential statistical data from national statistical offices and making efficient use of modern technologies for collection, processing and dissemination of statistics is a key part of this strategy.

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