

UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

21 June 2017

Sixty-fifth plenary session
(Geneva, 19-21 June 2017)

REPORT

**DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE 65th PLENARY SESSION OF THE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Decision 1: Matters arising from the 67th session of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) (agenda item 2)

1. The Conference reaffirmed the decisions of the 48th UNSC session that have implications for its work, as presented in document ECE/CES/2017/1.
2. The Conference took note of the resolution on the *Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* adopted by UNSC and subsequently by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Further, the UNSC decision 48/104 (e) “recognized the importance of collaboration among the Regional Commissions to address shared development challenges, in particular those related to the need to strengthen statistical systems in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The Conference requested strengthening the collaboration between the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and the Regional Commissions, which is especially important in the context of statistics for SDGs, for example, in clarifying the issue of data flows. Switzerland, vice chair of the UNSC, reminded of the results of the internal audit of the statistical work of the United Nations in 2016 that called for exploring the possibility of designating a senior official as a United Nations Chief Statistician.
3. The Conference noted the conclusion of the first UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development stating that “national statistical offices will have a key coordinating role in generating, disseminating and administering SDG-related data” and that it is consistent with the *Declaration on the role of national statistical offices in measuring and monitoring SDGs*, adopted by the 2015 CES plenary session (ECE/CES/89/Add.1);

4. The Conference noted the conclusion of the 67th UNECE Commission session that “The statistical work carried out by UNECE is high-quality, well-appreciated and widely-used, including beyond the region, as it is essential for advancing measurement for informed decision-making”. The Commission session further stated that “Monitoring SDG implementation requires strengthening statistical capacity” and in this regard “UNECE can play an important role in the provision of technical expertise and capacity building”.

Decision 2: Measuring poverty (agenda item 3)

5. The Conference recognized the high policy importance and growing demand for measuring poverty as a complex and multidimensional social issue. It recommended national statistical offices to involve relevant stakeholders in deciding on concepts and definitions used for compiling national poverty estimates.

6. The Conference discussed the following possible actions for the way forward:

(a) Strengthen efforts to harmonize poverty statistics and develop standards to enhance international comparability within existing quality assurance frameworks;

(b) Ensure transparency of methodological approaches, concepts and definitions, clear and coherent reporting on indicators and clear explanations in case of deviations from standards, methodological changes or breaks in the time series;

(c) Develop methodological approaches for measuring poverty in hard-to-reach population groups, such as internally displaced and the homeless;

(d) Undertake methodological work to broaden the income definition used for poverty analysis to include imputed rent and social transfers in kind, which have high policy relevance in many countries. This work would have to address the challenge of communicating indicators based on the different income measures;

(e) Undertake methodological work on complementing income poverty with a measure of asset-based poverty, which would greatly improve understanding of poverty and vulnerability to poverty;

(f) Develop robust statistical measures for subjective perception of poverty.

7. The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised during the seminar. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions, including those highlighted in the *Guide on Poverty*

Measurement. The Conference encouraged CES members to use the rich resource of papers and ideas produced by the seminar.

Decision 3: Guide on poverty measurement (agenda item 7a)

8. The Conference supported the *CES Guide on Poverty Measurement*. The Conference asked the Task Force on Poverty Measurement to revise the Guide to reflect the comments made in the electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session. The Task Force will submit the revised Guide and the plan for further work to the October 2017 meeting of the CES Bureau.

Decision 4: Integrating geospatial data and official statistics (agenda item 5)

9. The Conference noted decision C (67) of the UNECE Commission session, in April 2017, on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management, as a follow-up to the ECOSOC resolution (E/RES/2016/27).

10. The Conference recognized the importance of joint work between statisticians and geospatial experts. Areas highlighted for collaborative activity included the development and implementation of statistical geospatial frameworks, small-area estimation, the integration of standards, geospatial information as a tool for integrating administrative and statistical data, and developing a better understanding of confidentiality issues. This work will be important to support the 2020 round of population and housing censuses, and the measurement of progress towards SDGs.

11. The Conference supported greater collaboration between UNECE and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management in Europe (UN-GGIM: Europe), and the development of a concrete proposal for joint work, for a decision by the UNECE Executive Committee. The Conference also supported working towards anchoring UN-GGIM: Europe in UNECE in the future.

Decision 5: Work of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (agenda item 6)

12. The Conference approved the annual report of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS), including the outcomes of the activities carried out in 2016 and plans for the rest of 2017 (ECE/CES/2017/11).

13. The Conference strongly supported the continuation of the work on modernization of official statistics. National and international statistical organizations were invited to support the HLG-MOS work programme and to become partners in the Statistical Modernization Community.

14. The Conference endorsed the models and frameworks developed under HLG-MOS, namely the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM), the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA), and the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organisations (GAMSO).

Decision 6: The next generation of statisticians and data scientists (agenda item 4)

15. The Conference recognized the importance of the skills and capabilities needed to address the challenges that statistical offices face.

16. The Conference discussed the following possible actions for the way forward:

(a) Identify strategies to create an innovative culture where experimental activities are encouraged and rewarded, while addressing behaviours that suppress innovation;

(b) Investigate how to build capacity in soft skills, for example communication, and how to build teams with a mixture of competencies;

(c) Exchange experiences where partnerships and collaboration with academia, other government organizations and the private sector have supplied the needed skills for statistical organizations;

(d) Explore possibilities of how statistical organizations can develop a reputation of being an attractive workplace for talented individuals.

17. The Conference endorsed a 2-pager reflecting the conclusions of the seminar. The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised. The Conference encouraged CES members to use the rich resource of papers and ideas produced by the seminar.

Decision 7: Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals – Road Map (agenda item 7b)

18. The Conference endorsed the first edition of the *CES Road Map on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals*.

19. The Conference asked the UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs to continue coordinating the work on statistics for SDGs under CES ensuring full consistency with the work

of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB). The Steering Group should facilitate the implementation of the Road Map, in particular by developing guidance on national reporting platforms, clarifying the capacity building needs in the context of SDGs, and sharing experience at future expert meetings. The Conference encouraged countries to develop national Road Maps for statistics for SDGs.

20. The Conference requested the Secretariat to share the CES Road Map with other Regional Commissions.

Decision 8: Value of official statistics (agenda item 7d)

21. The Conference endorsed the *CES Recommendations on Promoting, Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics*, including the related measurement framework.

22. The Conference welcomed the UNECE wiki platform on best practices in promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics, developed by the Task Force, and invited countries and international organizations to continue to share their innovative practices through the wiki.

23. The Conference agreed with the proposals for further work, including taking stock of the best practices shared in the wiki and discussing the value of official statistics regularly at future expert meetings.

24. The Conference asked the Secretariat to launch the pilot testing of the framework for measuring the value of official statistics, and follow up with the outcomes to further develop the framework.

25. The Conference urged countries to use the Recommendations internally within national statistical offices amongst staff, and externally to increase the understanding of the value of statistical work.

Decision 9: Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the CES 2018 plenary session (agenda item 10)

26. Taking into account the results of the survey carried out among the CES members in March-April 2017 and the recommendation by the CES Bureau, the following topics were selected for seminars at the CES plenary session in 2018:

1. Seminar: Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics

Seminar organizers: Poland in collaboration with Israel, New Zealand and Slovakia.

Papers offered by: France (tbc), Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Slovakia (tbc), Sweden (tbc), United States, Eurostat and IMF (tbc)

2. Seminar: Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Seminar organizers: Montenegro in collaboration with Albania, Mexico and Netherlands

Papers offered by: Australia, Belgium, Croatia (tbc), Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United States, Eurostat and OECD

27. The CES Bureau will discuss the format and organization of the seminars at its October 2017 meeting.

Decision 10: Set of key climate change-related indicators (agenda item 7c)

28. The Conference endorsed the Report of the Task Force on an *Initial Set of Key Climate Change-related Indicators using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting*, subject to reflecting the comments received during the electronic consultation.

29. The Conference agreed that the initial set of key climate change-related indicators form the basis for pilot testing, and asked the involved countries to share the outcomes.

30. The Conference extended the mandate of the Task Force to refine the initial set of key climate-change related indicators based on the outcomes of the pilot testing, and to develop methodologies, data sources and guidance for implementation.

Decision 11: Unpaid household work (agenda item 7e)

31. The Conference endorsed the *CES Guide on Valuing Unpaid Household Service Work*. The Conference agreed with the need for further work in this area, and encouraged countries to compile Household Satellite Accounts, as recommended in the Guide.

32. The Conference asked the UNECE Group of Experts on National Accounts to follow up on the implementation of the Guide.

Decision 12: Communicating population projections (agenda item 7f)

33. The Conference endorsed the *CES Recommendations on the Communication of Population Projections*, subject to reflecting the comments received during the electronic consultation.

Decision 13: Outcomes of the in-depth reviews carried out by the CES Bureau (agenda item 8a)

34. The Conference endorsed the outcomes of the in-depth reviews of data integration, based on a paper by UNECE and HLG-MOS, and measuring governance, based on a paper by Mexico, Turkey and OECD, and noted that all in-depth review papers are available at: www.unece.org/stats/ces/reviews.html

35. The HLG-MOS project on data integration will continue in 2017. The CES Bureau will decide in February 2018 on possible follow-up to the review, taking into account the outcomes of the HLG-MOS project.

36. The Conference emphasized the importance of measuring governance, a novel issue that requires greater attention. The Conference agreed that further work in this area may be needed in follow-up to the Praia City Group on governance statistics and taking into account relevant OECD work in this area.

Decision 14: Exchange and sharing of economic data (agenda item 8b)

37. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the in-depth review of the exchange and sharing of economic data, based on a paper by Finland.

38. The Conference emphasized the urgent need for and importance of sharing data to improve quality of statistics while fully respecting the confidentiality of respondents' data. The Conference noted that it is essential to first reconcile data at national level, and agreed that establishing special units dealing with large and complex enterprises at national statistical offices is a prerequisite for having consistent data. The Conference expressed support for creating an international network of experts working in such units.

39. The Conference welcomed the establishment of the Task Force on Exchange and Sharing of Economic Data, and underlined the need to utilize the advantages of working in collaboration with other international and national organizations. The Conference asked the Task Force to report to the Conference early in its mandate to support statistical offices in addressing asymmetries in cross-border flows arising from the globalization of production, trade and

financing. The Conference asked the Task Force to develop innovative ways of data exchange and pilot test how these could work in practice.

Decision 15: Reports on the CES work, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists (agenda item 9a)

40. The Conference confirmed the decisions of the CES Bureau as reflected in their meeting reports, and approved the report on the implementation of the 2016 UNECE Statistical Programme (ECE/CES/2017/15).

Decision 16: Programme planning documents for the UNECE Statistics subprogramme (agenda item 9b)

41. The Conference adopted the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2017 (ECE/CES/2017/14) including the list of planned meetings, and the Programme of Work for 2018-2019 including the Publication Programme (ECE/CES/2017/13).

42. The Conference emphasized the importance of issuing as official documents and translating into the three official languages of UNECE (English, French and Russian) the main documents for the CES plenary session and its meetings in 2017-2018 in the following areas:

- Environment and multi-domain statistics
- Demographic and social statistics (gender statistics, population and housing censuses)
- Economic statistics (national accounts, global production, business registers, consumer prices and quality of employment)
- Statistical modernization (human resources management and training)
- Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

43. The main documents include the provisional agenda, the report and one main document for each sub-item on the agenda. For the CES plenary session, the main documents include in addition six documents for each sub-session.

Decision 17: Election of the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (agenda item 11)

44. According to the rules governing the work of the Conference and based on the proposal put forward by Ms. A. Zigure, the most senior Chief Statistician present at the Conference and previous Vice-Chair of the Conference, the Conference elected the following members to serve on the Bureau for the 2017-2019 term of office:

Ms. M. Bruun (Finland) as Chairperson;
and the following Vice-Chairpersons of the Bureau:

Mr. S. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia);
Mr. K. Pesendorfer (Austria);
Mr. A. Arora (Canada);
Mr. M. Kristof (Croatia);
Mr. J. Santaella (Mexico);
Ms. L. MacPherson (New Zealand);
Mr. J. Pullinger (United Kingdom).

Decision 18: Other business (agenda item 12)

45. The 2018 CES plenary session will take place on 18-20 (a.m.) June 2018 in Geneva, back-to-back with the meeting of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy.

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