

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Third Meeting of the 2001/2002 Bureau  
(Geneva, 21-22 February 2002)

**Report of 21 -22 February 2002 meeting and of the 4 March 2002 meeting**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The third meeting of the 2001/2002 Bureau was held in Geneva from 21-22 February 2002. The following members of the Bureau attended: Svein Longva (Chair), Len Cook (on 22 February), Hallgrimur Snorrason, Vladimir Sokolin, Tadeusz Toczynski and Katherine Wallman. The following permanent participants also attended: Yves Franchet, Enrico Giovannini and John Kelly. Mikhail Korolev of CIS-STAT also attended at the invitation of the Bureau. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Jan Byfluglien of Statistics Norway, Mariahelena Figueira of Eurostat, Janice Owens of OECD and Vladimir Shevchenko of the CIS-STAT. Lene Mikkelsen of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

**II. IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES 3 AND 5**

2. The Bureau briefly discussed the new format of the Integrated Presentation developed by the ECE secretariat. There was general agreement that the new format of the IP is a big improvement. It is easier to read and clearer for the users. However, some further adjustments have to be made. In this context, it was suggested that the section on 'Expected outcomes in the next two years' also include the expected deadline, so that the Bureau could follow up on the achievements. Eurostat recommended that the new format should stay stable for 5 years at least. The Bureau agreed to provide a follow-up of its "annual recommendations to the Conference" and "issues to be brought to the attention of the conference", by reviewing them at least every two years, in order to evaluate to which extent they have been implemented. The issue was further discussed under agenda item 7: Presentation of the Progress of the Database Version of the IP (action by the ECE secretariat).

3. The Bureau noted that the Integrated Presentation did not include the contribution submitted in Russian by the CIS-STAT. It was explained that the text for the various PAs had been sent for translation into English and would be included at a later stage.

a) Programme activity 3: Economic statistics

4. **P.A. 3.1, Implementation of the SNA:** OECD noted that there are still problems with quickly addressing new and emerging issues in national accounts. In this context, it was agreed that the attention of the Conference should be drawn to: how to address new and emerging issues arising in national accounts (**action by the ECE secretariat**). The first bullet of 'Issues and problems' should be moved to 'Expected outcomes'. In 'Expected outcomes' reference should be made to the fact that the EU manual on best practices in compiling price and volume indices in

national accounts has been published and that it is complementary to the Productivity Manual published by OECD (**action by the ECE secretariat**). OECD also requested a clarification on the ECE activity to update the Inventory of National Practices in Estimating Hidden and Informal Economic Activities for National Accounts. It was explained that the Inventory should be regarded as a complementary work to the OECD Handbook on Measuring the Non-Observed Economy. The Inventory will be published by the end of 2002. OECD suggested that the ECE secretariat update the Inventory every five years in order to follow developments of countries' practices (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

5. **PA 3.2, Money and banking, Government finance, and Balance of payments**: delete the bullets 'the international investment positions' and 'further work on seasonal adjustment' in Expected outcomes. It was noted that under the first part of this PA reference is also made to issues related to other PAs, such as metadata. The Bureau agreed that the 'Expected outcomes' need to be better identified as there are some general statements. In addition, it was agreed that some deadlines should be mentioned. It was suggested that the ECE secretariat go through the text and shorten it where possible. The same refers to the section on 'Issues and problems'. The Bureau agreed that the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the problems that the countries are facing with collection of good quality data on balance of payments statistics (**action by the ECE secretariat in consultation with IMF**).

6. **PA 3.3, International trade in goods**: the attention of the Conference should be called to the work carried out by the UNSD to develop the commonly agreed data set through an interagency cooperation with a view to reducing the response burden on national statistical offices. It was also suggested that a cross reference be made to the PA on classifications.

7. **PA 3.4, Transport statistics**: the Bureau was informed of the work undertaken by the ECE and Eurostat to revise the classification systems used in transport statistics. NST/2000 – the proposed standard classification for goods (presented in document CES/BUR.2002/18) was adopted by the ECE Transport Committee at its meeting in February 2002. **Eurostat will supply some amendments to this document**. The Bureau agreed to recommend to the Conference to endorse the revised classification. The Bureau also agreed that the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that there has been little progress in developing price indices for transport, which remains an area of high demand (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

8. **PA 3.5, Distributive trade**: the Bureau agreed that the structure of the PA should not be changed for the moment, despite some suggestions for adjustments of the text. The Bureau will come back to this PA next year. In this context, it was suggested that one possibility might be to merge PA 3.5 with Services Statistics (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

9. **PA 3.6, International trade in services**: the Bureau was informed of the discussions between OECD and Eurostat to release a new publication on international trade in services. In this context, it was noted that the publication of data may have implications on countries' policies.

10. **PA 3.7, Tourism**: The attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that the cooperation in the field of tourism statistics continues to work well. The next important field to work on is the update of the 1993 UN Recommendations on Tourism Statistics. Eurostat indicated that it is prepared to lead the work in cooperation with OECD and other international organizations (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

11. **PA 3.8, Other marketed services, and non-marketed services:** the Bureau agreed to review the structure of the PA next year. At present, the PA represents a mixture of short-term statistics and structural business statistics. With regard to the expected outcomes, it was suggested to include: (i) expected improvement of timeliness of short-term statistics; and (ii) improvement of the comparability between the EU and OECD non-EU short-term statistics (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

12. **P.A 3.9, Price statistics:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to lending support to the proposal by the World Bank to inject new resources into the International Comparison Programme (ICP). The attention of the Conference should also be called to the fact that the PPP work could benefit significantly from the participation of national accountants in the Programme. The Bureau agreed that the relevant conceptual work on price statistics developed by US and Canada should be reflected in the IP in the future (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

13. **PA 3.10, Agriculture, forestry and fishery statistics:** The Bureau was informed of the arrangements being made for the preparation of the Third World Conference on Agriculture. In this context, the Bureau agreed on the central role of the Inter-secretariat Working Group on Agriculture Statistics (IWG.AGRI) in coordinating the work. The Bureau agreed that the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that the area is extending its scope to encompass environment and transport. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that the IWG.AGRI continues to play an important role in coordinating the statistical activities of its members (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

14. **PA 3.11, Industrial statistics:** the Bureau considered the wording of the first bullet of expected outcomes 'reduced set of Steel Statistics' unclear (**text to be provided by Eurostat**). Add the sentence 'As from 2002, the OECD obtains data on structural business statistics from Eurostat and OECD member countries on a dual track basis. If it works out, data will regularly be taken from Eurostat as from 2003'. The Bureau agreed that the issue of joint data collection should be included in 'Expected outcomes'. The Bureau noted that the joint data collection is a major achievement and has to be reflected in the section 'Attention of the Conference'. The attention of the Conference should also be drawn to the fact that work is underway to improve joint data collection on Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) statistics and that some achievements are expected in the next two years (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

15. **PA 3.12, Energy statistics:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that countries should be alerted to the consequences of reducing the resources allocated to energy statistics. For monitoring of international protocols and agreements, the quality, coverage, details and timelines of energy statistics have to be improved. Any further cuts in energy statistics resources will lead to grave consequences for monitoring the global economy (price volatility) and the quality of statistics on the reduction of GHG emissions (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

16. **PA 3.13, Science and technology statistics:** the Bureau noted that work had been undertaken to integrate the R & D surveys and innovation surveys in the future. At present, two different manuals consider these two types of statistics. The Bureau felt that there is a need for both manuals to be integrated. OECD proposed that the OECD database on patent statistics should be included in the 'Expected outcomes'. This is the first database in this field (**OECD to formulate the output**). The Bureau recommended that the US, which has already developed patent statistics, cooperate with Eurostat and OECD on the issue. The Bureau agreed to draw the attention of the Conference to the following: (i) finalise improvements of various aspects of the Frascati Manual for R&D surveys and put them into practice; (ii) continue to develop and improve surveys of technological innovation and the associated indicators and, where necessary,

improve the Oslo Manual; (iii) update and expand existing methodologies and surveys in order to provide better indicators of the internationalization of science and technology and its application; (iv) improve regional breakdowns within member countries; (v) improve the existing methodology in revising the Canberra Manual; (vi) continue analytical and methodological work on patents and where necessary improve the Patent Manual (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

17. **PA 3.14, Business registers and administrative records in support of economic statistics:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that: (i) many countries are still in the implementing phase of the harmonization and development of business registers as a survey frame and source of information; (ii) a global harmonization of the treatment of enterprise groups is necessary, as the information on enterprise groups is essential for improving statistics on globalisation; in this context, the development of the OECD Manual of Economic Globalisation Indicators is important and an agreement at the UN level should be achieved; (iii) the Eurostat methodological development is incorporated in the Business Register Manual of Recommendations, which is currently being revised due to recent development. The finalisation of the draft and planned chapters will be achieved by the end of 2002 and input for this work is welcomed from all countries and international organisations (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

18. **PA 3.99, Other work in the field of economic statistics:** Eurostat proposed to draft the text for the Attention of the Conference - this text will consider Eurozone short-term statistics, the issue of accounting rules and the involvement of the statisticians in discussing the issue (**action by Eurostat**). OECD proposed that 'public sector activities' be moved to PA 3.8 'Other marketed services and non-market services', and that Measurement of the Non-Observed Economy be moved to PA3.1 Implementation of NA (**action by OECD and ECE**). The Bureau noted that the issue of business accounting rules is a key point and could be a topic for a seminar to be organized jointly with those involved in its development. The Bureau also noted that the development of indicators to measure efficiency of public sector is becoming more and more important from political point of view. The Bureau agreed that in the future Eurostat should serve as the Rapporteur for this Programme Activity.

b) Programme activity 5: Environment statistics

19. **PA 5.1, Sectoral concepts, definitions, classifications and environmental databases:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the need for better coordination of data collection, avoid duplication and focus on priority data sets ("streamlining" of data collection). The attention of the Conference should be also called to the fact that countries be urged to fill data gaps for prioritised environment statistics. The first bullet under "Attention of the Conference is drawn to" should be amended to read: "Statisticians need to be more actively involved in the early stages of work to identify and develop environment indicators to add practically to the mix of ideas and ensure the feasibility of any indicator proposed" (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

20. The Bureau noted that there is a growing network of national and international organisations dealing with environmental issues. In this context, the Bureau asked OECD and Eurostat to consider the possibility of preparing a document to identify the various institutions collecting environment data in order to control the requests for environment data to countries. Heads of national statistical offices should play a more active role in fostering the coordination of environment data collection. It was suggested that the paper be considered at a future plenary session.

21. The Bureau also noted the need for reviewing the list of indicators for environment statistics and for updating the respective classifications. OECD will review whether it would be possible to join the ECE and Eurostat in organising the Work Session on Methodological Issues of Environment Statistics. It was proposed to add a new topic “Coordination of data collection” to the agenda of this meeting. The Bureau agreed that for any activity related to sustainable development under PA 5.1, reference should be made to PA 2.8. Sustainable development indicators, where this area is considered in more detail (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

22. **PA 5.2, Environmental accounting**: the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the close interaction of environmental and economic accounting. The attention of the Conference should also be called to the completion of the revision of the SEEA handbook and to the need to develop, as soon as possible, the operational handbook to complement it (**action by the ECE secretariat**). The Bureau noted that at its present state, the Rapporteur’s report could be made available to the Bureau members only. It is expected that in early March there will be certain development in the work on the handbook and Eurostat will add in information about the implementation of SEEA (**action by Eurostat**).

23. The Bureau agreed that the text of the second bullet under “Strategic medium-term objectives” should be reformulated and the term “green accounting” should be taken out as it will not play a dominant role in the handbook. The implementation of SEEA should be added to the medium-term objectives. The implementation of environmental accounts is dependent of grants to promote the new manual and its possible uses among policy makers. In this context, OECD proposed to co-organize a workshop to promote this initiative to policy makers (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

24. With regard to **the Rapporteurs’ reports**, the Bureau decided to make available at the CES plenary session only Rapporteur’s reports on PA 3 and 5 (only those for which rapporteurs have given explicitly their consent), and to make a cross reference to last year’s Rapporteur reports for PA 1, 2 and 4. The Bureau also agreed that, in principle, the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the following areas: (i) areas where more work is needed, (ii) new and emerging work areas, (c) areas where successful implementation of work can be reported (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

### III. REVIEW OF PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES 1,2 AND 4

#### a) Programme activity 1: Organization and operation of statistical services

25. **PA 1.1, Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work**: the Bureau noted that more in-depth thinking should be done on this PA. Quality of the statistical work should be referred to in the PA. There should be a joint presentation of the issues rather than enumerating who does what. The Conference should specify the medium-term objectives for this activity. In the first bullet of the section “Activities of Eurostat”, the word “biennial” should be replaced by the word “annual”, and the words “and its Working Group” should be deleted. Moreover, in the same section, the text in the last bullet on “Priority objective of the methodological work” is too strong, and should be substituted with a new “softer” text to be provided by Eurostat (**action by the ECE Secretariat drawing on amended input by Eurostat**).

26. **PA 1.2, Management and policy issues of direct concern to presidents of national statistical offices**: the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the dissemination of statistical data. The Bureau also considered dissemination policies as a candidate for the topic for the seminar part of the 2003 CES plenary session. Other topics of interest to Heads of offices

could be: quality of statistics; globalisation and national statistics; changing role of NSIs (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

27. **PA 1.3, Countries in transition in the ECE region:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the integration programme concerning the countries accessing the EU (**text to be specified by Eurostat**). Concerning the CIS countries, the Attention of the Conference should be drawn to: (i) further activities to achieve comparability of CIS statistics with the statistical data of the other countries in the region; (ii) completion of the work on population censuses in the CIS countries (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

28. **PA 1.4, Relations with countries outside the ECE region (inc. countries in the Mediterranean region):** in the section on meetings, the PARIS21 meetings should not be indicated as OECD meeting because it is an initiative of a consortium of organisations. Moreover, the second bullet of the Activities of OECD (on the PARIS21 Consortium), the list of organisations participating in the consortium should also include Eurostat (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

b) Programme activity 2: Technical infrastructure and other cross-cutting issues

29. **PA.2.1: Management of information technology infrastructure:** the Bureau considered the wording under the bullet "Attention of the Conference" unclear and asked that the content of the text be improved. The Bureau asked that two new bullets be added to this section referring to the e-government initiatives going on in many countries and to the joint software being shared and developed by Nordic countries. Attention of the Conference should be also drawn to the increased tendency in sharing IT infrastructure, which could be an important strategic issue. It was also requested to spell out the abbreviation "ICT" in full in the text of PA 2 (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

30. **PA.2.2: Statistical data collection and processing:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to: (i) the creation of an EU statistical confidentiality environment as a key element for strategies and policies on the national level; (ii) methods to access a restricted set of information and restricted access to the information in an effort to fight terrorism; (iii) methods to access microdata for research purposes. Also, under "Expected outcomes...", in the second bullet, the word "confidential" is to be replaced by "micro" (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

31. **PA 2.3: Dissemination and interchange of statistical information:** the Bureau noted the issue of free dissemination of data versus pricing. Some countries are unhappy with the fact that some international organizations are charging for giving access to the data. The Bureau agreed that the word 'pricing' should be taken out from the text of the section "Attention of the Conference". The same refers to the last sentence in the text. A second bullet should be included in this section referring to progress made on the SDMX project, in which the IMF, EU, ECB, OECD, UNSD and other international organizations participate. The Bureau also considered that PA 2.3 lacks discussion on concrete common objectives, and agreed that improved text should be developed (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

32. **PA.2.4: Statistical classifications:** two bullets should be added to the section "Attention of the Conference": (i) the effort made by Statistics Canada, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática of Mexico, the United States Bureau of the Census and Eurostat on the convergence of industrial classifications NAICS/NACE; (ii) the revision of ISIC (**action by the ECE secretariat**). The Bureau asked Eurostat to prepare a clearer text for the fourth bullet of the

section on “Strategic medium objectives” (**action by Eurostat**). In Expected outcomes, ‘fast changing sectors’ should be replaced with ‘IT sector (**action by the ECE secretariat**)’.

33. **PA.2.5: Statistical research and development:** in the section “Expected outcomes in the next two years”, the text of both bullets should be made clearer (**Eurostat to submit a clearer text**). The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to prepare with the respective organizations a longer list of possible expected outcomes (**action by the ECE secretariat together with Eurostat, UNSD and IMF**).

34. **PA 2.7: Human resource development:** the Bureau felt that both sections on ‘issues and problems’ and on ‘objectives’ are a bit narrowly defined. The Bureau agreed that Attention of the Conference should be drawn to the possibility for an exchange of information between National Statistical Offices and Eurostat on issues related to human resources (**text to be submitted by Eurostat**).

35. **PA 2.8: Sustainable development indicators :** the section “Goal” should be changed to read: identify best measures for sustainable development; develop indicators or framework to evaluate sustainable development. The following two bullets should be added to the section “Attention of the Conference”: (i) necessity for active cooperation of NSOs in developing measures for sustainable development; (ii) evaluate the follow up of the Johannesburg Summit on sustainable development (**action by ECE secretariat and OECD**).

c) Programme activity 4: Social and demographic statistics

36. **PA 4.1, Demographic statistics (including projections, migration, fertility and families and households):** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the various problems in the field of international migration statistics, including the limitations of traditional statistical methods, the poor comparability of data, and thus the limited applicability of the UN recommendations by Member States. Attention should also be drawn to the improvement of the cooperation in data collection (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

37. **PA 4.2a, Population and housing censuses:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that several countries were unable to carry out the censuses for financial or technical reasons, and to the consequences of the transition from traditional census to register-based census in areas such as international migration or statistics on special groups (**action by the ECE Secretariat**). The Bureau was informed of a planned Joint UNECE/Eurostat meeting to be held in 2003 where the lessons from 2000 censuses will be discussed. The Bureau was also informed that the work on a new set of Recommendations for the 2010 round of censuses is planned to start in 2005 so that they can be adopted by the Conference in 2007.

38. **PA 4.2b, Statistics on population groups of special interest** a cross-reference should be added to the theme ‘disability statistics’ (PA 4.9). In this context, it was suggested to make a reference to the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS) which includes a module on disability (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

39. **PA 4.3, Human settlements and housing statistics :** A cross-reference should be added to PE 4.7a Statistics of household income and expenditures, of the welfare of the population, and of poverty and income inequality (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

40. **PA 4.4, Labour statistics :** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that there are no resources available to carry out the revision of ISCO-88, and the need to work on the

harmonization of the measurement of income earnings. It was suggested that the Recommendations of the Conference be directed to the 17th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. In the second bullet of 'expected outcomes' reference should be made to the Activities of the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation Statistics (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

41. **PA 4.6, Culture statistics**: the Bureau agreed that the 'Goal' for this programme activity should be changed, to reflect the fact that this is a specific area where comparability is not all that common or important. However, culture statistics are especially important for public policies in countries. The Bureau asked Mr. Len Cook to draft a new text for the Goal section. The Bureau also agreed that in the section 'expected outputs' the text 'continuous improvement' should be added (**action by the ECE Secretariat drawing on new text to be supplied by Mr. Len Cook**).

42. **PE 4.7a, Statistics of household income and expenditures, of the welfare of the population, and of poverty and income inequality**: the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the fact that the final report of the Canberra Group on Household Income Statistics is now available, and to the problems associated with the measurement of income earnings - which is one of the issues discussed in the report. A third bullet 'international comparability of earnings' should be added to 'Issues and problems' (**action by the ECE Secretariat**). The Bureau was informed that the issue of income earnings could be addressed by one of the OECD Working Groups.

43. **PA 4.7b, Social security statistics**: the Bureau noted that a lot of work is going on concerning the ageing of the population and costs associated with that. However, nothing is mentioned in the present IP. The Bureau decided to come back to the issue next year (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

44. **PA 4.8, Crime and criminal justice statistics**: the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the need for greater comparability of crime statistics, and to the differences existing between survey data and administrative data (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

45. **PA 4.9, Health statistics**: the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the issue of data confidentiality, which is particularly felt in the area of health statistics. The second bullet in the "Expected outcomes..." section should be modified to make clear that it refers to a coding system developed by the EU to implement the WHO manual. Eurostat proposed to send a text concerning this PA (**action by the ECE Secretariat and Eurostat**).

46. **PA 4.10, Gender statistics**: the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the problems encountered in measuring gender differences in earnings (**action by the ECE Secretariat**). The Bureau was informed about progress made in developing the regional Gender Statistics Website. At present the basic statistics is being collected. The work is being supported by UNDP funds. It is expected that the website will be made public in March and that the database will be operational by the end of 2002.

47. **PA 4.11c, Registers and administrative records for social and demographic statistics**: a reference should be added to PE 4.2a, on Population and housing census. The attention of the Conference should be drawn to the increased use of registers and administrative records for census purposes (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).



d) Programme activity 6: Dissemination and support for secretariat activities

48. **PA 6.1, Dissemination of data and coordination of international data collection:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the differences in pricing policies used by different national and international statistical agencies in the dissemination of statistical information. The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to present a text for 'Expected outcomes' based on activities already mentioned in the previous programme activities. The Bureau noted that there is a certain overlap between PA 6.1 and PA 2.3 and decided to review the issue at future meetings (**action by ECE secretariat**).

49. **PA 6.2, Other statistically related activities of the ECE secretariat:** the Bureau agreed that ECE should be the Rapporteur for PA 6.2. The Bureau also agreed that a cross-reference be made concerning the joint data collection by Eurostat and ECE of macro-economic data from the candidate countries (with reference to PA 3: Economic statistics) (**action by ECE secretariat**).

e) General comments on the Integrated Presentation

50. The Bureau thanked the ECE secretariat for the new structure of the IP, which is considered a big achievement. The Bureau encouraged its further development (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

#### **IV. PRIORITISATION OF THE STATISTICAL DIVISION'S AND THE CES WORK PROGRAMME**

51. John Kelly informed the Bureau that all Principal Subsidiary Bodies of the ECE had been asked to prioritize their activities using a proforma, in preparation for the biennial programme budget submission for the Commission. He explained to the Bureau the purpose of this prioritization and how it should be done. The Bureau agreed that the ECE secretariat should come up with a suggestion within two weeks time. The proposal could be discussed by e-mail or at New York (see para. 3 in the Annex to this paper).

#### **V. REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2001/2002 WORK PROGRAMME**

52. The Bureau noted that all activities included in the Conference's work programme for the initial part of 2001/2002 have been carried out as planned. The Bureau also noted that a major change is needed concerning the way 'outputs' are measured. For example, publications and manuals are outputs but not meetings. In this context, it was stressed that a meeting is not an achievement. The Bureau decided to come back to the issue and consider a better policy for measuring outputs. It was suggested that in future the achievements of the ECE be separated (**action by the ECE secretariat and the Bureau**).

#### **VI. PROGRESS ON THE SEMINAR SESSION FOR 2002 PLENARY**

53. The Bureau discussed under this agenda item the preparations for the Seminar session, which will comprise two parts – CES in the past 50 years and Present situation and possible scenarios for the future of CES. The Bureau reviewed first the part concerning the future.

a) Part concerning the future of the Conference

54. Yves Franchet introduced document Notes on Renewing the Conference of European Statisticians (CES/BUR.2020/10 Rev.2), prepared by Ivan Fellegi and himself. He noted that: the world is rapidly changing including Europe (in 2 years time 10 new countries will have joined the EU and this will be a major change) and the Conference has to draw up a vision to respond to these changes; there is concern that not enough work is done on the development of new emerging fast-track issues, e.g. intangibles, the new-economy, or that developments may drive apart; there are too many meetings for Heads of offices and therefore the Conference should be more focused; the Conference should focus on issues of priority interest to different groups of countries; the central role of the CES should bring these issues into the Conference; the Conference should move on to more substantive and focused issues, for example having two different sessions with separate agendas; the proposed new structure of the seminar sessions is meant to be non-exclusive and therefore meetings should be held in sequence, so that no countries will feel that they are excluded. Yves Franchet stressed that the changes proposed did not represent a revolution but the minimum change necessary in order to ensure attractiveness and the survival of the Conference. Also, the collegiality of the Conference and in particular the spirit of thrust and mutual respect that characterises the United Nations spirit was preserved.

55. In the discussion that followed, Michail Korolev stressed that trust and mutual respect of all countries is a primary objective of all UN meetings. He also stressed that the main role of the CES was to ensure international comparability, which is still valid today. The Conference had contributed to the constant improvement of the quality of statistics. There are still a lot of issues and problems to be resolved which are of interest to all countries. However, all countries are developing their statistical systems and the members of the CES should find ways to discuss issues of common interest, such as: timeliness, quality of statistics, international migration statistics, etc. It was also stressed that it is incorrect to divide countries into statistically developed and statistically not developed. The renewing of the Conference should not be dramatized but rather find the ways to strengthen it. It was suggested that the Notes should be improved to reflect the spirit of co-operation according to the basic principles of UN.

56. Len Cook noted that the paper is an excellent basis to move the discussion forward. He supported the issues raised by Michail Korolev and suggested that the issue of collegiality be emphasized in the paper. The Conference is the most important forum which helps the creation of a system of integration of national statistics.

57. Tadeusz Toczynski welcomed the new version of the Notes. He noted that the Conference has to work towards achieving an even better co-operation in the flow of data, quality of data, methodology, and setting priorities for data collection. He also stressed that the Conference should think how to avoid further sub-grouping of countries.

58. Enrico Giovannini noted that rather than referring uniquely to OECD, discussions at the Conference should aim at strengthening the role of Chief Statisticians and Director Generals of all countries in the national context. Therefore, discussions at the Conference could strengthen their role in the national context. The main outcome of the Conference is the exchange of views, discussing issues and identifying problems. It was suggested that the Bureau should consider how to make public what is discussed at the Conference – one possibility is to use press releases.

59. John Kelly informed the Bureau that the ECE secretariat would do whatever the Conference decides concerning its future structure. He noted that the paper has evolved from the

previous two versions, though there is still an awkward element and that this was the notion of splitting the CES countries into two groups. However, the UN principle is to bring countries together – and that trust and mutual respect is important. He also considered that one important element, which should be explicitly stated in the paper, is that each of the group's meetings should be open for all countries, and that all countries should be encouraged to participate in both meetings.

60. Yves Franchet noted that the paper should try to exclude anything which looks exclusive. Issues, such as mutual respect, principles of official statistics and collegiality should be emphasized.

61. Hallgrimur Snorisson also welcomed the positive development with the paper. The paper now refers to 'two modules' and not to 'splitting' the Conference.

62. Katherine Wallman noted that she agrees with the issues raised by M. Korolev. She suggested that if two separate agendas are set in the future, the Bureau should play an active role in defining them. She also stressed that the paper on the renewing of the Conference should make sense to the people and the Bureau should make sure that they understand what is proposed. In this context, it was suggested that the Bureau comes up with a proposal to be submitted to the Conference.

63. During the discussion, it was also noted that the paper does not address issues concerning strategies of international organizations, such as IMF and the WB. In this regard, it was mentioned that the Conference is the only place where statisticians could talk to these organisations. This is of particular importance in view of the fact that IMF is developing standards and codes which involve experts from national Banks and Ministries of Finance but not so much statisticians. In principle, the Statistical Commission should be the forum for discussing issues concerning the international organizations, but because of its broad agenda it is not easy to have a discussion of that kind. The real advantage of the Conference is the fact that it has a Bureau that is very active and functions smoothly. On one hand, the Bureau gives certain formality to the CES, but on the other hand it is an informal forum for a frank exchange of views and ideas.

64. In conclusion, the Bureau agreed that: the authors should prepare a new draft to reflect the comments and circulate it to the members of the Bureau within a week; the paper should exclude anything which looks exclusive; the principles of trust, mutual respect and collegiality should be emphasized in the paper; the new version would be further discussed at the informal meeting of the Bureau to be held on 4 March in New York ; the Bureau should prepare a proposal for adoption by the Conference based on the discussion that would take place during the seminar session (**action by Yves Franchet and Ivan Fellegi**).

b) Part concerning the past of the Conference

65. The Bureau discussed the preparations for the Seminar session on the past of the Conference and reviewed the structure and the chapters of the booklet on the history of the CES presented in document CES/BUR.2002/16/Add.1. It was agreed to communicate to Mr Malaguerra, editor of the booklet, the following suggestions: (i) that the issue of the growing role of the international statistics is missing from chapter 8; it could be dealt in both chapter 8 and 9; (ii) that Mr. Sokolin be co-author for chapter 6; (iii) that the driving force is globalisation and not international institutions. The Bureau also agreed that the booklet should be finalized by the end of November and be published by the end of the year (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

## **VII. MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR LEVY, VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE EC**

66. At the invitation of the Bureau, Ambassador Levy, Vice-Chairman of the Economic Commission for Europe, participated in the Bureau meeting, so as to better acquaint himself with the work of the Bureau and the Conference. Ambassador Levy informed the Bureau about the changes that happened in the Bureau of the Commission. He also informed the meeting of the recent debate about the role of the Bureau of the ECE: Three issues have been discussed: (i) how to make available the work carried out by the ECE secretariat to the public; (ii) how to bring the media; and (iii) what is the meaning of the ECE work to the public at large. A fourth issue recently has emerged concerning the membership of the ECE and the fact that several countries will join the EU in the near future. In this context, Ambassador Levy asked the members of the Bureau to share with him any ideas they might have related to the issues he raised.

67. In the discussion that followed it was noted that: the Bureau is trying to preserve the unity of the Conference of the European Statisticians, which is a platform where member countries could exchange views and send messages to other international organizations; the Conference and its Bureau can play a leading role in avoiding the split between countries because of the process of the EU enlargement (integration of 10 new countries); that UNECE could play a big role in avoiding isolation in Europe; the Bureau is working towards ensuring a transatlantic co-operation. It was also noted that national statistical offices are facing everyday the question how to explain to the public through the media the importance of what they do, which is also pertinent to the issues debated by the Bureau of the ECE.

## **VIII. RECOMMENDED TOPIC FOR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSION AT THE 2003 CES PLENARY SESSION**

68. In view of the eventual changed format of the Conference in future, the Bureau did not recommend a specific subject for substantive discussion at the 2003 plenary session. The Bureau agreed that some good ideas for possible topics were mentioned throughout the review of the IP and asked the ECE secretariat to prepare a tentative list of topics for review by the Bureau (**action by the ECE secretariat**). The Bureau also agreed to adopt the principle that topics for discussion at future CES seminar sessions should be of general interest to all countries. It is particularly important that emerging issues are also discussed. In future, the tentative list of topics could be first discussed within the Bureau and then sent to the CES for final decision. The Bureau agreed to explore the possibility that the Conference authorize the Bureau to select the topics (**action by Svein Longva**).

## **IX. DRAFT AGENDA AND TIMETABLE OF THE 2002 PLENARY SESSION**

69. The Bureau was generally in agreement with the proposed agenda and timetable of the 2002 plenary session that was outlined in CES/BUR.2002/15/Add.1. The following suggestions were made: (i) change the wording under item 4 to read 'Possible scenarios for the future of CES'; (ii) change the 'cold war period' with 'past and future' (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

70. The Bureau discussed at some length the ceremonial part of the 50th Anniversary plenary session. It was agreed that the Executive Secretary of the UNECE and the Secretary General of OECD should be invited to address the Conference for 10-15 minutes each. This will be followed by a 'key-note address by a prominent statistician'. It was agreed that: (i) the time for a key-note address, at present 45 minutes, should be split into two speeches, and that (ii) the names of the possible key-note speakers should be agreed between the members of the Bureau shortly after its

meeting and communicated to the ECE secretariat (**action by the ECE secretariat in consultation with the Bureau**).

71. The Bureau discussed the composition of the Panel for the Ceremonial session. The following possible composition was proposed: (i) former Chairmen of the Conference; (ii) Heads of statistical offices of international organizations; (iii) President of the ISI; (iv) UNSD. The Bureau will ask one of the Panel members to lead the discussion (**action by Svein Longva**). With regard to the timetable for the ceremonial session, it was agreed that certain flexibility should be envisaged. One possibility is to move the lunch break earlier (with a short coffee break) and start the afternoon session with the Panel discussion. During the afternoon session the Bureau could also make its proposal for the future format of the Conference. The afternoon session should also include a demonstration of the database on the IP (**action by the ECE secretariat in consultation with the Bureau**).

#### **X. PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRESS OF THE DATABASE VERSION OF THE IP**

72. Tim Knight of the ECE secretariat made a presentation on the database of the IP, which is considered work-in-progress. In the first stage, the database will be interactive only for the ECE secretariat, in the second stage the IP will be posted on the ECE web site for the users, and in the third stage, the secretariat will look at the possibilities for interactive use from outside ECE, such as the Rapporteurs, Eurostat and OECD.

73. The Bureau noted that the IP database would be a very useful tool, but needs to be developed even further to satisfy the needs of all member states. In this context, it was proposed that the ECE secretariat prepare a short paper on what has been achieved plus the timetable for finalizing the work. Eurostat will consider the possibility to provide some assistance in finalizing the data, particularly with regard to its uploading. The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to inform the Bureau what is needed for improving and developing the database by June (action by the ECE secretariat, Eurostat and the OECD).

#### **XI. IMPACT OF THE SEPTEMBER 11 EVENTS ON THE CONFERENCE'S WORK**

74. John Kelly informed the Bureau that all SBs are invited to contribute to the discussion on the impact of the September 11 events. The consequences of 11 September for the work of ECE will be discussed by the Commission on 8 May, at the time of its annual session (7-10 May). The Bureau agreed that one of the Deputy-Chairmen should represent the Bureau at the Commission because Svein Longva cannot attend it (**action by Svein Longva**).

#### **XII. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT BUREAU MEETING**

75. The Bureau agreed to have a luncheon meeting in Paris at 12:30 on 10 June, immediately prior to the opening of the 2002 plenary session.

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**Annex to the report of the meeting on the Bureau's meeting of 4 March 2002  
in New York**

1. As agreed by the Bureau at its 21-22 February meeting, the Bureau held a special ad hoc meeting in New York on the margins of the 5-8 March 2002 session of the UN Statistical Commission. The special CES Bureau meeting took place on the afternoon of 4 March in the Conference Room of the UN Statistics Division. The following members of the Bureau attended: Svein Longva (Chair), Len Cook, Vladimir Sokolin and Katherine Wallman. The following permanent participants also attended: Yves Franchet, Enrico Giovannini, Hermann Habermann and John Kelly. Carol Carson of the IMF, Mikhail Korolev of CIS-STAT and Ivan Fellegi of Statistics Canada also attended the meeting at the invitation of the Bureau. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Suzann Evinger of OMB; Mariahelena Figueira of Eurostat. Bela Prigly of Statistics Canada also attended. John Kelly served as Secretary of the meeting.

2. The Bureau discussed the amended version of the Fellegi-Franchet paper on the proposed renewing of the Conference of European Statisticians that Eurostat distributed by e-mail on 27 February and that the ECE secretariat reproduced as CES/BUR.2002/10/Rev.2. The Bureau agreed that that version of the paper was a further improvement on the earlier versions, and that it was now in a form that could be used as the basis of discussion at the plenary session. It asked the ECE secretariat to proceed and convert it into a document for the plenary session.

3. The Bureau approved the contents of the explanatory note on the prioritisation of the Statistical Division's and the Conference's work programme (CES/BUR.2002/19), and asked the secretariat to proceed and issue the note as a document for the plenary session.

4. The Bureau reviewed the list of possible additional topics for discussion at future plenary sessions that had been put forward by Bureau members during the Bureau's 21-22 February meeting (CES/BUR.2002/17/Add.1). It agreed to postpone reviewing both this list and the preceding list of possible future seminar sessions (CES/BUR.2002/17) until the Bureau meetings that will take place on the margins of the June 2002 plenary session in Paris, and based on the outcome of the Conference's discussion at the plenary session of the Fellegi-Franchet paper (CES/BUR.2002/10/Rev.2) and its supporting papers during the part of the seminar that will be devoted to the future of the Conference and its plenary sessions.

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