

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Second Meeting of the 2002/2003 Bureau
Geneva, 13-14 February 2003

Report of the 13-14 February 2003 meeting

INTRODUCTION

1. The second meeting of the 2002/2003 Bureau was held in Geneva from 13-14 February 2003. The following members of the Bureau attended: Svein Longva (Chair), Stephen Penneck (replacing Len Cook), Hallgrímur Snorrason, Vladimir Sokolin, Tadeusz Toczynski and Katherine Wallman. The following permanent participants attended: Pedro Diaz Munoz (replacing Yves Franchet), Enrico Giovannini and Heinrich Brünger. The following persons attended at the invitation of the Bureau: Willem De Vries of UNSD, Mikhail Korolev of CIS-STAT, Carol Carson of IMF, Ivan Fellegi and Béla Prigly of Statistics Canada, Svante Öberg and Matti Niva of Statistics Sweden, Miroslav Macura of UNECE-PAU, Abdhlay Mechbal and Somnath Chatterji of WHO. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Jan Byfuglien of Statistics Norway, Mariahelena Figueira of Eurostat, Hermann Habermann of the US Census Bureau and Andrei Kosarev of the CIS-STAT. Lidia Bratanova of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

I. IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES 1, 2 AND 4 AND REVIEW OF THE DRAFT UPDATED VERSION OF THE INTEGRATED PRESENTATION

2. The Bureau reviewed in-depth programme activities 1, 2 and 4 of the Integrated Presentation and the rapporteurs' reports that had been prepared by the designated rapporteurs. At the same time, the Bureau discussed the follow-up to decisions taken in the past by the Conference and the Bureau on specific programme elements (doc. CES/BUR.2003/29).

a) General comments on the Integrated Presentation and the Rapporteurs' reports

3. The Bureau agreed that the structure of the **Integrated Presentation** should be reviewed in order to reduce duplication as far as possible and to eliminate those programme elements that are no longer significant and contain very limited information. The ECE Secretariat was asked to formulate a detailed proposal to be presented at the October 2003 meeting of the Bureau. The proposal should consist of a few relatively simple changes so as not to substantially affect the classification used in the Integrated Presentation. Moreover, the new structure of the IP should be as compatible as possible with the classification of activities of Eurostat and OECD. In particular, there should be no need to split the text provided by these organisations into two different programme elements. The Bureau also agreed that an introductory note about the purpose of the IP be prepared for review by the Bureau at its October 2003 meeting (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

4. With reference to the content of the Integrated Presentation, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to update the sections “Issues and problems”, “Strategic medium-term objectives” and “Expected outcomes in the next two years” to better reflect the text on the activities of the various organisations and the content of the rapporteurs’ reports (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

5. The Bureau also gave the ECE Secretariat the mandate to reallocate text between different programme elements in the Integrated Presentation if this is considered necessary (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

6. The Bureau noted that in some cases the Integrated Presentation and the rapporteurs’ reports are too “euro-centric”. It would be interesting to provide more information on what is taking place in countries such as the United States and Canada. It was agreed that in cases where there are important activities in the United States or in Canada that would be of significant interest to other countries, they should be mentioned. The Bureau asked Statistics Canada to identify these cases, draft some text and sent it to the ECE Secretariat for inclusion in the corresponding documents (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

7. With regard to the fact that the **Rapporteurs’ reports** will be made available to the public, the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to amend them to reflect the decisions taken and the comments formulated by the Bureau, and to improve the format before they are made public (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

b) Programme activity 1: Organization and operation of statistical services

8. **PE 1.1, Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work:** the Bureau requested additional information on the proposals developed by the ECE Secretariat in the rapporteur’s report, with the aim of improving the coordination of the various statistical activities of the UN organisations and moving towards a UN system of official statistics.

9. The ECE Secretariat explained that it was recently appointed as co-leader, together with the UN Statistics Division, for coordination in statistics for those UN organisations that are members of the Executive Committee – Economic and Social Affairs, or EC-ESA (including the UN Secretariat, the UN Regional Commissions, UNCTAD and other selected organisations but excluding specialised agencies). The final goal of this initiative, which was promoted by Mr. Nitin Desai (UN Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs) and covers nine different areas in addition to statistics, would be to improve the efficiency of the system by creating synergies. Mr. Brüngger explained that the proposals made are still at a very early stage of discussion and need to be developed. The ECE Secretariat decided to present them to the Bureau in order to receive feedback and advice.

10. The Bureau members observed that the proposals, if approved, would have significant implications that need to be taken carefully into consideration. Therefore, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to formulate to the October 2003 meeting of the Bureau a more detailed proposal that should address possible implications on the work of UNSD and other UN departments and organisations. The ECE Secretariat was also asked to modify the report to indicate that the proposals are still at a preliminary stage, and to formulate a paragraph on this subject to be included in the Integrated Presentation (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

11. Mr. Giovannini noted that the OECD went through a similar process of strengthening the internal coordination in statistics and offered support and material that could be useful in this

context. He also advised the ECE Secretariat, in developing the proposals, to take into account the experience of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative.

12. The Bureau also asked the ECE Secretariat to include in the section of the rapporteur's report on outputs (para. 17) references to outputs that are described in the Integrated Presentation but not in the report, such as the SDMX initiative. In the same paragraph, the text "None" should be replaced with "Not applicable" (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

13. With reference to the text on "Strategic medium-term objectives" proposed in the rapporteur's report (para. 21), the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to soften the text and to add that the proposals are to be reformulated (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

14. The Bureau noted that the quality of the statistical work should be referred to in Programme Element 1.1: Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work. The Bureau agreed to come back to this issue in future (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

15. **PE 1.2, Management and policy issues of direct concern to presidents of national statistical offices:** the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to add, in the first bullet of para. 49 in the rapporteur's report, a reference to programme element 6.1, where coordination of data collection is discussed. The list of working groups and coordinating bodies presented in the annex to the rapporteur's report should be updated and each group/body should be listed only once (if there are more meetings, only the dates should be repeated) (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

16. **PE 1.3, Countries in transition in the ECE region:** the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to delete bullet nos. 3, 5 and 6 in the section "Strategic medium-term objectives" of the Integrated Presentation. The Bureau agreed to review the activities in this Programme Element from the point of view of subject areas. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the October 2003 meeting (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

17. **PE 1.4, Relations with countries outside the ECE region (inc. countries in the Mediterranean region):** The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to delete bullet nos. 3 and 4 in the section "Strategic medium-term objectives", and bullet no. 4 in the section "Expected outcomes in the next two years" of the Integrated Presentation. The outputs listed in para. 68 of the rapporteur's report should be included in the Integrated Presentation. The first sentence in para. 69 of the rapporteur's report should be deleted (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

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

18. **PE 2.1: Management of information technology infrastructure:** the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to draft a joint letter on behalf of ECE, Eurostat and OECD to be sent to Heads of Offices to request contributions to the website on Best IT Practices in Statistical Offices (see doc. CES/BUR.2003/29, para. 21) (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

19. The Bureau recommended that the main outcomes of IT projects carried out in the context of the 5th and 6th European Research and Development Frameworks be presented among the outputs, with a particular focus on outputs that can be useful for all members of the Conference (**possible action by Eurostat**). In paragraph 9, the output in section III (iv) should be deleted (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

20. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to reduce overlapping as far as possible between this programme element and others. In particular, policy issues should not be mentioned in this programme element. It should only include technical and IT issues (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

21. With reference to a possible policy-oriented paper on the development of IT technologies in the various countries (see doc. CES/BUR.2003/29, para. 22), the ECE Secretariat informed the Bureau that a decision would be taken at the forthcoming joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (Geneva, 17-19 February 2003). A paper would be presented at the October 2003 Bureau meeting if a survey among countries is launched on this subject (**possible action by the ECE Secretariat**).

22. **PE 2.2: Statistical data collection and processing:** the attention of the Conference should be drawn to the possible combined use of business registers data and data collected for fiscal purposes. This issue is particularly important for large enterprises, for which a better coordination of data collection for statistical and fiscal purposes would result in a significant reduction of the collection burden (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

23. With reference to the SDMX initiative (doc. CES/BUR.2003/29, para. 23), Eurostat informed the Bureau that the project is moving forward and a joint document would be presented at the Statistical Commission.

24. The Bureau noted that paragraphs 19 and 20 in the rapporteur's report should be amended to reflect the decision taken by the Bureau on the review of the structure of the Integrated Presentation. Moreover, the first sentence in para. 20 should be amended to read: "the reuse of NSOs' standard electronic data products by the international organisations when it is cost effective and feasible" (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

25. **PE 2.3: Dissemination and interchange of statistical information** no comments by the Bureau.

26. **PE 2.4: Statistical classifications:** the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to reformulate the text in paragraphs 41, 43, 45 and 47 of the rapporteur's report (the current text is "None") (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

27. **PE 2.5: Statistical research and development:** the Bureau noted that progress made by IMF and Eurostat on developing quality data framework should be added to the list of fields in which progress has been made collectively by organisations towards the stated objectives and expected outputs in the rapporteur's report (para. 53) (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

28. **PE 2.6: Geographical and regional data:** no comments by the Bureau.

29. **PE 2.7: Human resource development:** attention of the Conference should be drawn to the issue of coordination in the field of statistical training, mentioned in para. 80 of the rapporteur's report (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

30. **PE 2.8: Sustainable development indicators :** the Bureau agreed that the word "indicators" should be dropped from the name of the programme element, to read "Sustainable development".

31. With reference to the possible creation of a UN Intersecretariat Working Group on statistics for sustainable development, mentioned in para. 86 of the rapporteur's report, the Bureau agreed that OECD-Eurostat-ECE would send a joint letter to UNSD to include in the agenda of the UN Statistical Commission a discussion item on the creation of an Inter-Secretariat Working Group on statistics for SD. The ECE Secretariat was asked to reformulate the last sentence of para. 87 of the rapporteur's report in order to better describe which topic could be a candidate for a seminar session of the CES in 2004 and to include the paragraph in the IP (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

d) Programme activity 4: Social and demographic statistics

32. **PE 4.1, Demographic statistics (including projections, migration, fertility, and families and households)**: The Bureau stressed the importance of the issues mentioned by Eurostat in the general comments to this programme element in the rapporteur's report (paragraphs 1, 2 and 3). The issues should be considered for priority setting and should be adequately reflected in the Integrated Presentation (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

33. In the field of migration statistics, the Bureau also stressed the need to urge countries to work towards harmonising the definitions and follow the UN recommendations. Estimates of international migration are still very poor and in order to improve their quality it is important that Statistical Offices work in cooperation with the other Government agencies and administrations concerned (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

34. In the field of statistics of households and families, the Bureau commented on the recommendation made by Norway that Eurostat and ECE work together in an attempt to study the many new emerging types of families, households and living arrangements that are growing in importance in many countries in the region. The recommendation was approved by the April 2002 Eurostat meeting of Directors of Social Statistics but follow-up work on the recommendation has not been initiated. The ECE Secretariat informed the Bureau that the proposal would be discussed at the forthcoming Eurostat Working Group on Demographic Statistics and Censuses (19-21 February 2003) and that the ECE supports the proposal and is ready to participate actively in this initiative. The Bureau reaffirmed the importance of advancing the work in this area.

35. **PE 4.2a, Population and housing censuses**: the ECE Secretariat informed the Bureau that the plans for preparation of the new set of recommendations for the 2010 round of censuses would be discussed at the Eurostat Working Group on Demographic Statistics and Censuses (19-21 February 2003) and also at the joint ECE-Eurostat Work Session on Population and Housing Censuses (21-23 May 2003, Ohrid). More details will be available after these two meetings.

36. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to review the text in the second bullet in section "Attention of the Conference is drawn to the following" of the IP. The Bureau noted that the implementation of register-based censuses does not necessarily have important consequences on international migration statistics (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

37. **PE 4.2b, Statistics on population groups of special interest**: The Bureau noted that the availability of longitudinal data in this field is very limited. The Chief of the ECE's Population Activities Unit (PAU) mentioned two examples: the US Health and Retirement Survey and the recent decision by nine EU countries to collect longitudinal data on various categories of

variables. He observed that initiatives in this area are mainly promoted by universities because the Statistical Offices are not very active.

38. With reference to the project on older persons based on census microdata samples, which the PAU carried out in the 1990s, the PAU was asked to describe briefly in the rapporteur's report some of the main findings of this study (**action by the ECE Secretariat and the PAU**).

39. **PE 4.3, Human settlements and housing statistics** : Eurostat proposed that the ECE Secretariat become the rapporteur for this programme element in future. The ECE and Eurostat will further discuss this proposal (**action by Eurostat and the ECE secretariat**).

40. **PE 4.4, Labour statistics** : the rapporteur's report submitted by ILO (doc. CES/BUR.2003/20/Add.1) identified several critical areas in labour statistics where work is needed and argued that "the integrated presentation does not lend itself to the consideration of labour statistics in an integrated manner". The Bureau noted that the comments made in the report need further analysis. The Bureau also noted that it would be useful to invite ILO to the Plenary Session in 2004 to discuss the critical issues identified by ILO and to receive advice on possible action to address these issues (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

41. **PE 4.5, Education statistics** : the ECE Secretariat informed the Bureau that the report was received from OECD only a few days before the Bureau meeting and in French only¹. OECD apologised for the inconvenience due to a recent change in the internal structure of the organisation. The report will be translated into English and distributed to the Bureau members for feedback, in particular on possible proposed changes to the Integrated Presentation (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

42. **PE 4.6, Culture statistics** : The Bureau approved the proposal for the organisation of a joint ECE/UIS-UNESCO/Eurostat meeting to establish a joint work plan for the coming years. The ECE Secretariat explained that a Steering Group should be formed to prepare this meeting, and OECD expressed interest in participating in the Steering Group, given its involvement in the area of adult education (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

43. **PE 4.7a, Statistics of household income and expenditures, of the welfare of the population, and of poverty and income inequality**: the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to amend the Integrated Presentation to reflect the suggestions and recommendations made in the rapporteur's report (para. 93 and 94). With reference to the "Statistics on Income and Living Conditions" (SILC) survey, the Bureau observed that, in general, surveys should not be listed as outputs. However, the establishment of a new survey could be considered among the outputs (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

44. **PE 4.7b, Social security statistics**: the Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to amend the Integrated Presentation to reflect the suggestions and recommendations made in the rapporteur's report (paragraphs 101 and 104). Paragraph 103 of the rapporteur's report should be amended to read as follows: "103. OECD and Eurostat should reduce as much as possible the workload of data collection for the participating countries." (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

45. OECD asked that a reference to the Social Expenditure Database (SOCX) be added in the section "Activities of OECD" (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

¹ NOTE: The rapporteur's report was submitted in English by OECD after the Bureau meeting.

46. The Bureau noted that the work on ageing of population and the associated costs is mentioned in the IP as recommended by the Bureau last year.
47. **PE 4.8, Crime and criminal justice statistics** : the Bureau was informed that the report had not been submitted by UNICRI by the time the meeting was opened.
48. **PE 4.9, Health statistics** : the Bureau was informed that the report had not been submitted by OECD by the time the meeting was opened². The Bureau discussed the relation with the WHO, with reference to the World Health Surveys (see item VIII. Co-ordination of work on health statistics with the WHO).
49. **PE 4.10, Gender statistics** : no comments by the Bureau.
50. **PE 4.11a, Social indicators and frameworks** : the Bureau observed that more work is needed to improve international collaboration on social statistics. The Bureau also noted that there is a need to establish a mechanism where the work on social statistics can be coordinated. Existing groups like the Siena Group are not always effective. Furthermore, their work should be more focused on specific outputs. It was also noted that at the next Statistical Commission the agenda item "Framework for social statistics" would be discussed. The Bureau also agreed that para. 121 in the rapporteur's report should be amended to read: "To continue to use appropriate fora to develop a common approach to social indicator development." The Bureau agreed to come back to the issue at a future meeting (**action by the ECE secretariat**).
51. **PE 4.11b, Multi-purpose social surveys** : no comments by the Bureau.
52. **PE 4.11c, Registers and administrative records for social and demographic statistics** : no comments by the Bureau.

II. REVIEW OF PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES 3, 5 AND 6

a) Programme activity 3: Economic statistics

53. **PE 3.8, Other marketed services, and non-marketed services**: The ECE Secretariat was asked to review the Integrated Presentation. In particular, publications that have already been completed should be deleted from the section "Expected outcomes in the next two years" (**action by the ECE secretariat**).
54. **PE 3.9, Price statistics** : The ECE Secretariat was asked to reformulate the third and fourth bullets in section "Strategic medium-term objectives" in the Integrated Presentation, to reflect the content of the section "Activities of Eurostat". Moreover, the information on EC staff remuneration in the section "Activities of Eurostat" should be deleted (**action by the ECE secretariat**).
55. The Bureau asked Statistics Canada to draft a contribution on the relevant conceptual work on price statistics developed by US and Canada for inclusion in the future IP (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

² NOTE: The rapporteur's report was submitted by OECD after the Bureau meeting.

b) Programme activity 5: Environment statistics

56. **PE 5.1, Sectoral concepts, definitions, classifications and environmental databases:** with reference to the note to be prepared by Statistics Norway on its national experience in dealing with requests coming from various IOs (see doc. CES/BUR.2003/29, para. 8), Statistics Norway informed the Bureau that it will report at the next meeting of the Bureau (**action by Statistics Norway**).

57. **PE 5.2, Environmental accounting:** the UN Statistics Division reported on the SEEA manual. The manual was finalised thanks to the support of Statistics Canada, but it has not yet been printed. The index to be drafted by IMF and the glossary to be drafted by UNSD are almost finished. The manual will be translated in all UN official languages, but this will take time. Concerning the preparation of an implementation manual, there are generic plans but a decision was not taken.

58. OECD informed the Bureau that a workshop on "Accounting Frameworks for Sustainable Development" will take place in May 2003.

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

59. **PE 6.1, Dissemination of data and coordination of international data collection:** the Bureau discussed the proposal made by OECD for creating a unique location where all questionnaires used by International Organisations are stored in electronic form. In general, the Bureau members agreed that this would be a useful initiative, although there could be technical problems caused, for instance, by the very large number of questionnaires used by some organisations. It was agreed that the proposal would be discussed at a future meeting of the CCSA (ex-ACC) in September (**action by UNSD**).

III. INTEGRATED PRESENTATION

(a) Database on Integrated Presentation

60. The ECE secretariat briefly presented the note "Integrated presentation database – Status report" (doc. CES/BUR.2003/21). According to the work plan described in the note, the second phase of the project, which aims at implementing a Web-based browsing interface, will be completed in April 2003. The Bureau also discussed the possible impact of future changes in the classification of the activities of the Integrated Presentation on the database.

(b) Translation of the IP into Russian and French

61. The Bureau discussed the issue based on a note prepared by the ECE secretariat. It was noted that the Integrated Presentation is currently translated into French and Russian with huge delays. As a consequence, when the translated versions are available, they are no longer relevant and therefore of little use. Since short documents are translated more quickly, the ECE Secretariat proposed that a shorter version of the Integrated Presentation be prepared in future, including the first part of each programme element but not the sections on the activities of the various organisations. The shorter version will be composed of approximately 70-80 pages as compared to some 240-250 pages of the full document. The ECE Secretariat believes that this shorter version will be translated in time for the plenary session. The Bureau agreed with the

proposal and requested that an information note be added to inform the readers that only the short version of the document is translated, while the full version of the IP is available in English only and is available on the ECE website (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

IV. CHANGING THE WAY ‘OUTPUTS’ ARE MEASURED: FOLLOW-UP. REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2003 WORK PROGRAMME OF THE STATISTICAL DIVISION.

62. In October 2002, the Bureau decided that any joint meetings in future would be prepared by a steering group to define the activities, the final output, the process of achieving the output and the time framework, and asked the ECE Secretariat to report to it at its February 2003 meeting.

63. The Bureau discussed the issue based on a note prepared by the ECE secretariat. The Bureau made several comments and recommendations on the various steering groups that were set up in different areas and that were described in the note.

64. With reference to the proposed Working Group on Dissemination of Statistical Commentary, it was clarified that this group would not be limited to dissemination to media only. The Group will differ from the previous group on dissemination to media, which will cease existing once the guidebook is completed. The Bureau noted that the time schedule for the proposed new working group should be shortened and suggested modifying the terms of reference for the group accordingly (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

65. As for the Steering Group on the organisation of a statistical workshop to the World Summit on the Information Society, the ECE Secretariat clarified that this would not be a series of meetings, but a “one-off” initiative limited to the organisation of the workshop.

66. With regard to the joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD work on SNA, it was agreed that there is no need to establish a steering group, as the work is reported to the ISWGNA.

67. Enrico Giovannini informed the Bureau that OECD is interested in joining the work on labour statistics.

68. The Bureau noted that it would be useful if the “outputs” defined by the ECE Secretariat are better explained. Therefore, it was recommended that the ECE Secretariat prepare a short explanatory note to explore the difference between objectives, outcomes, and outputs to be reviewed by the Bureau at its October 2003 meeting (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

69. The Bureau also noted that the membership of the steering groups to define the terms of reference for any joint activity has to be defined, whether they are to be composed of representatives of the International Organisations or of member countries. In this context, the Bureau agreed that the steering groups would be composed of representatives of the respective secretariats but it is important that country experts be well represented.

70. The Bureau also agreed that it is advisable that the steering groups have a shorter time horizon. The creation of these groups seems to be very useful and therefore the Bureau should establish a routine for reviewing the joint activities that are undertaken on a regular basis.

V. MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR KULL (ESTONIA), CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

71. At the invitation of the Bureau, Ambassador Kull, 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. Mr. Kull was accompanied by Mr. Paolo Garonna, Deputy Executive Secretary of the ECE. Ambassador Kull informed the Bureau about the ongoing discussion on the future of the Commission and the different views of the various countries. The consequences of the EU enlargement will be discussed at the forthcoming annual session of the ECE in March.

72. Several Members of the Bureau informed Ambassador Kull about the role of the CES. It was noted that the CES is a unique place where all important national and international players discuss together topics such as leading edge issues, challenges, coordination and potential overlaps on a voluntary basis. The Conference has no formal authority over these players, however, it works well and this is a unique example that should be maintained and, if possible, improved upon.

73. Mr. Garonna talked about the role of the Executive Committee – Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA) which will discuss the impact of the UN reforms on the future budget. In the statistical field, there will be a review of the UN global statistical system, which will concern both the ECE and the CES. Mr. Garonna also mentioned a series of workshops to be organised by the ECE in different substantive areas on the future of the enlarged Europe.

74. With reference to the impact of the EU enlargement on the relations with the Russian Federation, Mr. Sokolin reminded the Bureau that the CIS countries have been working for a long time to address these issues and that international cooperation in this area has a long tradition. It will take some time for the CIS countries to follow the same road as the Baltic countries in the implementation of the Eurostat standards, but this will be done successfully, also thanks to international support and assistance. He also noted that, in his view, the consequences of the EU enlargement will create relatively fewer problems in statistics than in other areas.

75. In concluding the meeting with Ambassador Kull, the Chairman of the CES reminded the Bureau of the vital role of the ECE Statistical Division in the work of the Conference and added that, given the small size of the division, even small cutbacks would have a very serious impact. Therefore, he recommended that the budget of the division not be reduced.

VI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SEMINAR SESSIONS AT THE 2003 PLENARY SESSION

(a) Seminar session on “Statistical confidentiality”, organised by Statistics Sweden

76. The representative of Statistics Sweden presented a revised proposal for the seminar on statistical confidentiality. It was proposed that the following sessions be organised:

- Session I: Overview and use of microdata
- Session II: Confidentiality issues in transition economies
- Session III: Legal aspects
- Session IV: Different approaches in accessing microdata

77. The Bureau discussed the new structure and in particular the possible change in the name of the session on “transition economies”, since it deals with issues that are in fact relevant also in other countries.

78. The ECE secretariat, member of the organising committee, presented a note on the results of the ad-hoc survey of the ECE countries about their concerns with statistical data confidentiality. Replies to the survey were submitted by 33 countries and summary results submitted to Statistics Sweden for consideration in preparing the seminar session.

79. Concerning the submission of papers, the ECE secretariat informed the Bureau that once the outline of the sessions is finalised, letters will be sent to countries to request supporting papers. Invited papers will be solicited directly by the session organisers. They should be submitted by 20 March in order to be translated, otherwise they will be available in English only. Authors could also choose to send the papers already translated into French and Russian. In this case, the deadline is 15 May.

80. The Bureau discussed the possibility of preparing, after the seminar, a publication with the papers prepared for the seminar and the results of the survey. Alternatively, the proceedings of the seminar could be published in the Statistical Journal of the UNECE.

(b) Seminar session on “Globalisation: record keeping of multinational enterprises, FDI vs. export”, organised by Statistics Canada

81. Mr. Fellegi presented the proposal for the seminar on globalisation. Unfortunately, the keynote speaker (David Dodge, the Governor of the Bank of Canada) will not be able to come to Geneva on 12 June, therefore the speech will be made via teleconference. The speech will also be taped in advance as a backup in case of technical problems with the teleconference. Some Bureau members observed that having the keynote speech via teleconference is not an ideal solution and proposed to think of possible alternatives. Mr. Fellegi noted that Governor Dodge may be able to give the speech in person if the seminar is held on 11 June. It was agreed that the possibility of swapping the dates for the two seminars would be investigated by the organisers of the two seminars (**action by Statistics Canada and Statistics Sweden**). If the seminar on globalisation takes place on 12 June, the agenda should be modified so that the speech by Governor Dodge would be given later in the day.

82. Eurostat informed the Bureau that it would like to be discussant for session 3 of the seminar and also to contribute a paper. With reference to the same session, IMF informed the meeting that the database on the Coordinated Portfolio Investment Survey is available on the IMF website.

83. The Bureau discussed the possibility of presenting the OECD Manual on Economic Globalisation Indicators, which should be finalised before the plenary session. It was agreed that the ECE secretariat would contact OECD to follow up on this issue (**action by OECD and the ECE secretariat**).

84. The Bureau proposed to the seminar organisers to consider the possibility of contacting some institutes that carry out research and produce summaries on globalisation, and also multinational companies that could provide a different perspective of the phenomenon.

VII. CONSEQUENCES FOR THE WORK OF THE STATISTICAL DIVISION CAUSED BY CHANGES IN PRIORITIES AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGION, SUCH AS THE EU ENLARGEMENT

a) Objectives and priorities for the Statistical Division in 2003

85. Mr. Brüngger presented the objectives and priorities for the Statistical Division in 2003 as well as the new organisational chart. It was noted that the activities are spread very thinly and therefore a new proposal will be developed. The concrete proposal, in the form of a new ECE Statistical Programme, will be presented to the Bureau in October 2003. Mr. Brüngger also mentioned the problems with the very low travel and training budget for the Division, and expressed the hope that a solution will be found to this problem.

b) Possible enlargement of the Bureau and the membership of the Conference

86. Mr. Brüngger presented the ECE note on this issue. He noted that there are several countries which are not members of the UNECE but which regularly participate in the work of the Conference. Therefore, it would be advisable to give the opportunity to these countries to be represented in the Bureau without having to exclude some of the current members. For this reason, it was proposed to extend the size of the Bureau from six to a maximum of eight members.

87. The Bureau discussed in detail the proposal considering advantages and disadvantages. It was agreed that the proposal would be submitted to the plenary session of the Conference in June 2003. The Bureau also asked the secretariat to avoid the wording "global role" and delete it from the ECE note (doc. CES/BUR.2003/24). The Bureau agreed that the length of the future Bureau meetings should be decided by the new Bureau to be elected in June 2003. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to delete the paragraph referring to the proposal for two-day meetings in future (**action by the ECE secretariat**).

c) Annual ECE Statistical Programme - proposal for a procedure to be endorsed by the Bureau and the Conference

88. Mr. Brüngger presented the proposal that an annual ECE Statistical Programme for the year 2004 be prepared and submitted to the Bureau for its review and endorsement. The Bureau agreed to review the draft ECE Statistical Programme at its meeting in October (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

VIII. CO-ORDINATION OF WORK ON HEALTH STATISTICS WITH THE WHO

89. Mr. Longva opened the discussion on this item by reminding the Bureau of the concerns of the CES and the Bureau with regard to the World Health Survey (WHS) and in particular the lack of coordination with work already being undertaken by countries and international organisations in the ECE region and the very limited involvement of the National Statistical Offices. Two letters had been sent to WHO in 2002 by the Chairman of the CES and by the Executive Secretary of the ECE to express these concerns and to invite WHO to discuss these issues at the February 2003 meeting of the CES Bureau.

90. The WHO was represented by Mr. Abdelhay Mechbal, Director of the Health Financing and Stewardship Department, who presented the main characteristics of the World Health Surveys. In response to the concerns expressed by the CES, Mr. Mechbal explained that WHO's constituency covered the Ministries of Health and not the National Statistical Offices. He added that the surveys have been organised in many countries in cooperation with the local Health Ministry or other departments or agencies without involving the National Statistical Offices because of the little cooperation existing in these countries between the other government departments and the NSO. Nonetheless, Mr. Mechbal informed the Bureau that the WHO is committed to increasing partnerships and collaboration with National Statistical Offices and other stakeholders for the future developments of the surveys. In this regard the ongoing discussion with UNECE to organize a meeting related to the methodological aspects will be extended to cover the way to strengthen partnerships.

91. Several members of the Bureau reiterated their serious concerns about the way the surveys are organised. It was noted that the simple organisation of a meeting with the International Organisations is not sufficient to address these problems. It was proposed that more regular and concrete mechanisms be put in place to allow for the international statistical community to consult, discuss and have an impact on the project.

92. It was also stressed that the WHS project is a valuable opportunity to build statistical capacity in all participating countries. However, this will be possible only if the project is developed within the framework of the national systems of official statistics. In some countries, the Ministries of Health are part of the system of official statistics, while in others they are not. In the latter case, and in all cases where household surveys are used, it is important that the National Statistical Office be also involved in the project in order to ensure that the surveys, data collection and dissemination meet the internationally agreed standards of official statistics.

93. Mr. Mechbal noted the concerns that had been expressed and stated that the WHO would develop a plan to increase the collaboration in the future and make the entire process more transparent. He informed the Bureau of the Director-General's decision to establish a 5 experts' group in relation with different aspects of Health System Performance Assessment including one in the area of health statistics. Most probably, experts from the UNECE will be involved.

94. The Bureau recommended that in the composition of the Statistical Review Group all main International Organisations should be taken into consideration, and that the group should not be an internal WHO group. The Bureau also requested that the WHO inform the CES of the constitution of this group and suggested that a joint meeting of this group and an expert group acting under the CES be organised.

95. It was reminded that the coordination of work on health statistics with the WHO will also be discussed in March at the Statistical Commission and that various papers, including a paper from Eurostat, will be presented. The Bureau expressed the wish that the discussion at the Statistical Commission clarify the mechanisms that will allow the international statistical community to have an impact on the project, and requested WHO to present at the Statistical Commission a time-table of their statistical activities to make sure that national statisticians are involved at the early stage of planning. The Bureau stressed the importance of involving the CES and statistical offices during the planning phase of the statistical activities. Mr. Mechbal acknowledged all the valuable suggestions that had been made and reiterated that WHO would present concrete actions at the Statistical Commission in March.

96. The Bureau also noted that it is crucial that the Expert Group to be created by the WHO use the Conference of European Statisticians as a vehicle for integration of the WHO work with the statistical work of the other International Organisations. It is advisable that joint meetings be organised with Eurostat, OECD and ECE in order to obtain integrated, coordinated surveys and to avoid the development of separate statistical tools.

IX. DRAFT AGENDA AND TIMETABLE FOR THE 2003 PLENARY SESSION

97. The ECE secretariat will prepare a new draft outline of the provisional agenda and timetable for the forthcoming plenary session, taking into account the comments made by the Bureau. The Bureau decided to move the item on selection of topics for future seminars to the second day of the plenary session. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to circulate the list of topics as approved by the 2002 CES in advance and to prepare a proposal for endorsement by the Bureau (**action by the ECE Secretariat**).

X. FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE BUREAU

98. In October 2002, the ECE secretariat proposed a format and made available a note for monitoring the implementation of the decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference. The Bureau decided that a document of that kind be prepared for each future meeting. The Bureau also considered the possibility that a similar note be made available as a document for the CES plenary sessions.

99. The Bureau discussed the note prepared by the ECE secretariat on follow-up to decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference (doc. CES/BUR.2003/29). In addition to the amendments approved during the review of the Integrated Presentation, the Bureau agreed on the following:

- Para. 20: “OECD proposed that the PARIS 21 group should prepare an information note on its statistical activities.”
P The Bureau approved the proposal (**action by PARIS21**).
- Para. 29: “The Bureau agreed that a note on the review of the social and demographic framework be prepared by UNSD for the Bureau meeting in February 2003.”
⇒ The Bureau asked UNSD to prepare the note for October 2003 (**action by UNSD**).
- Para. 41: “The [September 2002 DGINS] meeting discussed the future of the European Statistical System in view of the EU enlargement... It was suggested that some information on the outcome of this meeting be distributed at the Conference in June 2003.”
P The Bureau asked Eurostat to draft a note and prepare a short presentation for the Conference in June 2003 (**action by Eurostat**).
- Para. 42 “The Bureau was informed of recent work undertaken by Eurostat to coordinate its work on the Quality Assessment Framework with that carried out by IMF. Both international organisations will present reports to their respective Executive Boards. Eurostat also works on the issue with OECD. It was proposed that a presentation be made at the 2003 Conference. Eurostat will check with IMF and report to the Bureau in February.”
P Eurostat informed the Bureau that a report had been prepared and reactions from countries are being received. If possible, a paper will be prepared for the Conference in June (**action by Eurostat**).

XI. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT BUREAU MEETING

100. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Bureau would take place on 10 June at 12h30. As usual, it would be a lunch meeting that will take place before the opening of the plenary session, and organisers of the two seminar sessions will also be invited. As for the October 2003 meeting, the Bureau agreed to set 16-17 October as tentative dates (other possible dates are 23-24 October)

XII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

101. The Bureau discussed possible initiatives aimed at increasing the visibility of its work, including putting the final reports of its meetings and selected other documents on the ECE website. It was agreed that the report and selected documents would be posted on the ECE website in a "post-Bureau" version, modified to take into account the comments of the Bureau.

102. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to inform the Bureau members by email when the Bureau documents are posted on the ECE website. Furthermore, it was also decided that the ECE Secretariat create a distribution list of senior managers in the NSOs (at the level immediately below the Heads) and circulate to them the Bureau documents, in order to increase the visibility of the work of the Bureau.

103. The Bureau supported the ECE proposal that the contact with the Heads of NSOs should be maintained throughout the year and not only at the time of the plenary sessions. The distribution of the Bureau documents is a step in this direction.

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