

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

First meeting of the 2003/2004 Bureau
Washington, D.C. (United States), 20-21 October 2003

REPORT OF 20-21 OCTOBER 2003 MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. The first meeting of the 2003/2004 Bureau was held in Washington from 20-21 October 2003. The following members of the Bureau attended: Katherine Wallman (Chairman), Milva Ekonomi, Luigi Biggeri, Vladimir Sokolin, Irena Krizman, Svante Öberg. Dennis Trewin was unable to attend the meeting but participated in the discussions on agenda item 5 via a teleconference. He also sent to the Bureau written comments for each agenda item. The following permanent participants also attended: James Whitworth (representing Michel Vanden Abeele), Enrico Giovanini, Mikhail Korolev, Willem de Vries and Heinrich Brünger. The following persons attended at the invitation of the Bureau: Carol Carson of IMF, Misha Belkindas of the World Bank, Ivan Fellegi and Béla Prigly of Statistics Canada, Miroslav Macura and Alphonse MacDonald of UNECE-PAU, Hermann Habermann, Louis Kincannon and Suzann Evinger of the United States. Lidia Bratanova of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.
2. Katherine Wallman welcomed the participants to the first meeting of the 2003/2004 Bureau. James Whitworth informed the Bureau of recent changes and reorganization that is taking place in Eurostat. He confirmed the Eurostat interest in the work of the Conference and its Bureau and in continuing international cooperation.
3. The Bureau agreed that all documents for its meetings should be circulated two weeks in advance. It was also suggested that Bureau members provide written comments where appropriate in order to facilitate the discussion. The ECE secretariat was asked to investigate the possibility for collecting and sharing electronically written comments on the Statistical Programme in advance (**action by ECE**).

INTEGRATED PRESENTATION

4. The Bureau discussed the proposals put forward by the ECE secretariat for: changes to the programme elements in the Integrated Presentation (IP); changing the Rapporteurs for four statistical areas; and for a possible review of the classification of the statistical activities. The Bureau agreed with the overall proposal. The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to produce a short paper to inform the users of IP about its purpose. The possibility of moving the July to June reporting in the IP, as it now stands, to calendar reporting (January to December) was also discussed.
5. The Bureau welcomed the proposal that WHO be the Rapporteur on health statistics in future, since this will facilitate cooperation with WHO.

6. The Bureau discussed the possibility of a review of the overall classification of statistical activities. It was noted that a new classification should take into account new activities and new technologies for the dissemination of data. For instance, the current classification does not distinguish between short-term statistics and business statistics. Another example is the definition of P.E. 5.1: Sectoral concepts, definitions, classifications and environmental database, which has a unique label while covering the activities, both on methodology and data. It was noted, however, that changing the classification of PA 5: Environment statistics is a substantial change; therefore, all changes should be made at the same time, not one by one. It was stressed that, during any review, the main purpose of producing the IP should be kept in mind, i.e. to permit heads of NSOs to follow international statistical work.

7. The issue of linking the ECE Annual Statistical Programme and the IP was also discussed. Eurostat noted that, in the past, they had to adjust to the July to June reporting. The classification of statistical activities as currently used in the IP and approved by the ACC in 2001 is used by a number of organizations, including Eurostat, in the preparation of the EU Statistical Programme. Therefore, the rationale for revision of the classification should be presented in a paper as soon as possible (**action by ECE**).

8. The Bureau agreed to adopt a calendar biennium reporting system in the IP beginning in January 2005-2007. The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to report in February 2004 on the feedback of using the IP database. In this context, it was noted that the work on developing the remote updating of the IP should be finalised soon (**action by ECE**).

ANNUAL ECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME

9. The ECE secretariat was commended for developing an Annual Statistical Programme. The Statistical Programme (SP) provides a good overview of the statistical work carried out by the ECE Statistical Division. However, some concern was expressed with regard to the resources available in the Statistical Division and the fact that 30 persons are spread over 39 activities.

10. There was an overall consensus of the Bureau on the ECE statistical programme. The Bureau endorsed the programme. However, some concerns about specific items were recorded during the discussion and in the written comments submitted by Dennis Trewin.

11. The Bureau agreed with the activities proposed for phasing out in the period 2004-2005, with the exception of activity 3.2: Statistical Data Editing. Some reservations were expressed in relation to the work on updating the Handbook of Official Statistics and the value added that this kind of activity would bring. Some Bureau members questioned activity 3.20: Crime statistics and what the impact and the value added that the ECE secretariat could bring to this area could be. The Bureau agreed that it would come back to some of the items in February 2004 (e.g. to further explore the work on crime statistics) (**action by ECE**).

COORDINATION OF UN STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES

12. Heinrich Brüngger informed the Bureau of the ECE proposal aimed at improving the coordination of the various statistical activities of the UN organizations and moving towards a UN

system of official statistics that was presented at the last meeting of the UN Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA). The CCSA decided that a drafting group be created to prepare a declaration of principles for the statistical activities of international organizations. The list of principles should be agreed at the 2004 CCSA meeting and be later adopted by the Statistical Commission.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE SEMINAR ON GLOBALISATION

13. The Bureau reviewed the terms of reference for the creation of a Steering Committee for the MNE Project based on a note submitted by Statistics Canada. The Committee will provide guidance on the overall objectives of the MNE Project that was proposed by Statistics Canada at the last Conference held in June 2003. The major objective of the MNE Project is to identify areas where more standardised and/or coordinated approaches in measuring activities of MNES could contribute to improved national and international economic statistics. It was proposed that the CES Bureau serve as its Steering Committee.

14. Some concern was expressed that confidentiality legislation may limit the extent to which the countries that volunteered to participate in the project can share firm level data. It was explained that it is not planned to ask MNE to provide detailed information, but rather to visit the MNE headquarters to collect methodological views about the different approaches in measuring the activities. The first phase of the project would try to determine whether there is a problem in measuring the MNE activities and, if so, what is its nature. It was also noted that the work on the MNE project should draw on the experiences from the joint Eurostat/ECB project concerning the balance of payments statistics in NNEs.

15. The Bureau agreed that a detailed plan for the project be reviewed in February 2004. The Bureau also agreed that the ECE secretariat be involved in the project and provide secretariat support (**action by Statistics Canada and ECE**).

PRESENTATION OF THE STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES OF IMF

16. Carol Carson made a short introduction to the way the IMF's Statistics Department is organized and made a presentation of the recent developments and current initiatives of the Department. The Annual Report and 2004 Business Plan that is usually prepared on the occasion of the IMF's Annual Meetings was circulated for information. IMF participates regularly in the work of the CES Bureau and contributes to its work. Presentations to the Bureau were made on the work of developing the SDDS and GDDS in the mid-1990s and on the Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) in 2001. The main goals and objectives of the Statistics Department in 2004 will comprise: continuing to administer the SDDS and GDDS and the Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSCs); strengthening Fund surveillance (policy consultations) and programming (lending) through the provision of methodological guidance; enhancing statistical capacity through technical assistance and training; and producing relevant statistical publications.

17. The Bureau noted that the IMF's Statistics Department has been very active in the area of training. At a recent meeting of PARIS 21 held in Paris, it was proposed that IMF's training material be put together as a publication. In this context, it was explained that the IMF was very

pleased with the model used in training on external debt, where several organizations were involved. The training sessions were set up together with the other organizations providing assistance, bringing in different perspectives on training. With regard to recommending 'best practices', it was explained that recent work on ROSCs has provided material to identify practices in 'revision policies'. The Bureau also noted that the IMF's dissemination policy is to put an increasing amount of information on the Internet.

18. The Bureau agreed that the IMF's presentation was very interesting and successful. It was decided to continue the practice of other organizations making presentations on their statistical activities. The World Bank was invited to make a presentation at the October 2004 Bureau meeting (**action by ECE and the WB**).

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SEMINAR SESSIONS AT THE 2004 PLENARY SESSION

19. The ECE secretariat briefly presented the outlines for organizing the two seminar sessions submitted by Statistics Finland, organiser of the session on National Statistical Offices, and by the Office for National Statistics, U K, organiser of the session on Measurement of prices and volume in the service sector.

20. The 2004 Conference will be organized in a similar way to the 2003 Conference, i.e. to be built around three modules: formal business and two days for seminars. The ECE secretariat will aim at streamlining the documentation, especially for the formal session on the first day. The in-depth discussion on one or two statistical areas from the Integrated Presentation to be selected by the Bureau at its February 2004 meeting should be based on the respective Rapporteurs' reports that the Bureau will review in February. The three areas to be reviewed in-depth in February are: economic statistics, environment statistics and dissemination of data and coordination of international data collection.

a) Seminar on National Statistical Systems (NSS)

21. The Bureau reviewed the short outline for organizing the seminar session prepared by Statistics Finland. It is proposed that the seminar consist of four sessions: (i) the scope and organization of NSS; (ii) coordination within NSS (excluding regional/federal coordination); (iii) official statistics as a brand; (iv) efficiency of NSS. The Bureau members made the following comments:

- since the topic is more important for the NSOs, the Russian Federation, rather than CIS-STAT, should be a member of the Organizing Committee;
- there are too many topics on the agenda. They are all relevant but each of them could be a topic for a separate seminar - focus the discussion;
- there is a risk of having descriptive papers rather than issue papers;
- the organizers should aim at producing issue papers;
- it is important to discuss the role of NSOs vis-à-vis the international organizations;
- topic (i) is neither particularly useful or interesting – it should not be a core topic for discussion; it could perhaps be covered by a background paper on best practices or 1-2 short papers on institutional arrangements;

- the issues on integrity and independence is important;
- choose between topics (i) and (ii): topic (ii) is an important topic and thus merits more in-depth discussion;
- Coordination problems within the NSS become acute in relation to the work on MDG;
- Include a topic about the role of the Head of NSS, because of his/her influence on the development of statistical system; there are some core issues to be defined;
- Discuss the issue of generating demand for statistics; a key successful factor is the ability to generate the demand externally to which the NSS can respond; how to use statistics to generate statistics;
- Support for topic (ii) Coordination within the NSS. Sweden will contribute a paper;
- Exclude discussion on federal and regional coordination;
- Instruments and tools for coordination is an important topic: for example the statistical councils and how they are used; coordination between the statistical office and other ministries and with the international organizations;
- The Russian Federation expressed interest in topic (iii) Official statistics as a brand;
- Proposed that UK ONS contribute a paper for item (iii);
- Presentations should not be long: more time for discussion;
- The discussion will benefit by bringing speakers from outside the statistical office;
- A background paper on best practices could be prepared on the basis of the questionnaire that was circulated by the UN Statistics Division.

22. The Bureau agreed to communicate the comments of the Bureau members to Statistics Finland and ask the Office to start the preparations for the session in cooperation with the other committee members (**action by Statistics Finland and ECE**).

b) Measurement of prices and volume in the service sector

23. The Bureau reviewed the short outline for organising the session by ONS of United Kingdom. The outline suggests four sessions: (i) Current international practice for measuring price and volume in the service sector; (ii) the statistical framework for improving service sector price and volume measurement; (iii) fitness for use of service sector statistics; (iv) approaches to reviewing service sector statistics – the chicken or the egg. The following comments were made:

- The outline presents a list of headings rather than issues;
- The seminar should not be very technical; discuss issues of importance to the heads of offices;
- Select 2-3 topics where countries have made progress; share information on lessons learned;
- Not much comparability of methods used by countries, some are more advanced than others in measuring the prices in the service sector;
- Sessions (i) and (ii) look most useful;
- Support for topic (ii); sub-headings for the topic not quite relevant;
- Use two sessions to cover topic (i); the innovative practices of the various Offices should be of interest; cover also measures of volume that do not rely on price deflators;
- Volume of trade in services another area of interest;

- The ECE secretariat should survey the existing country practices similarly to the survey done for the session on Confidentiality last year.
- Drop sessions (iii) and (iv) and replace them with a session focusing on output measures of service volumes (e.g. indexes of production) and the methodological issues associated with these measures;
- A paper on public sector statistics will be useful;
- Australia could provide a paper on prices and volumes in the service sector;
- Invite a well-informed external user from UK who could comment on what statistics governments/ markets are looking for from the service sector.

24. OECD informed the Bureau that OECD was asked at the last UN Statistical Commission to play a coordination role in the service sector. A paper was prepared and presented at the Voorburg Group meeting held in early October. A lot of technical discussion is taking place, which includes topics such as short-term evolution of services (production of monthly or quarterly indices), how to build a system for producing price indices for complex industries, deflation of services. In this context, the Eurostat manual on price and volume measures was mentioned.

25. The Bureau agreed to communicate the comments to the ONS to start the preparations for the session in cooperation with the other committee members (**action by ONS and ECE**).

FOLLOW-UP TO THE SEMINAR ON STATISTICAL CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Task Force on Confidentiality and Microdata

Dennis Trewin presented via teleconference the Terms of reference for the Task Force on Confidentiality and Microdata.

26. The Bureau agreed with the overall proposal. A set of core principles should be established that could be useful to the international statistical community. The principles should also cover the international organizations. With regard to the organization of how the Task Force will work, it was explained that it would be a mixture of written consultations and face-to-face discussions. In this context, it was recommended that the individual experts that will be consulted in the course of the work should be selected from the countries that are members of the Task Force. Furthermore, since confidentiality is an issue of interest to all countries, there should be more general discussion.

27. The Bureau agreed to review a draft of principles at its meeting in February 2004 (**action by Dennis Trewin**).

b) Book on confidentiality and access to microdata

28. Svante Öberg presented a draft publication with the proceedings of the seminar on confidentiality and access to microdata that was held within the Conference in June 2003. The publication is a joint work of the ECE secretariat and Statistics Sweden who will publish the proceedings by the end of 2003. The Bureau commended the ECE secretariat and Statistics Sweden for the timely work.

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

29. The Bureau was informed of the outcome of the expert meeting on setting the scope of social statistics held in April 2003 in New York based on a paper submitted by the UN Statistics Division. The meeting proposed a programme of work for furthering the development of social statistics.

30. There was general agreement that the paper is good and provides a strong base for future action. However, the proposed work programme for social statistics, 2004-2014 is a bit too ambitious. Some concern was expressed about the large number of workshops and expert meetings that are planned in the next few years, including international meetings every two years. It was stressed that the work programme for social statistics should be narrowed down. There is a need for a well-defined minimum programme, which is realistic, and which most countries would be able to accomplish in the next ten years.

31. The Bureau noted that social statistics is generally underdeveloped in relation to what is required. The disparities between countries are greater in the area of social statistics than in economic statistics. Moreover, while close to 100 per cent of economic statistics is official statistics, in the case of social statistics it is not always as clear how much is official and how much comes from other sources. In this context, the issue of how to define "official statistics" was briefly discussed. It was noted that, in many countries, a general Statistical Law defines which producers produce official statistics. On the other hand, the production of statistics by private research institutes is clearly outside the official statistics. It was proposed that the definition and status of "social statistics" be discussed by the Conference in June 2004 (**action by ECE**).

32. The focus on social issues is increasing in Europe. The work is expanding from the economic to the social area, particularly in relation to the work on social cohesion. Furthermore, there is more focus on regional information and the need for administrative sources. The use of microdata is also important since they are needed for social research.

33. The Bureau noted that, for some countries, social statistics is only related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). From the point of view of the developing countries, the UNSD paper raises some issues, such as the MDGs and the type of studies and surveys that are needed.

34. Eurostat informed the Bureau of the outcome of the DGINS seminar on Social Statistics in the enlarged EU held in Athens in September 2003. The seminar was organized around five themes and several problems were identified. An action plan for social statistics was drawn up.

35. In conclusion, there was broad agreement that social statistics is an important area and needs to be developed systematically. It was also felt that there is a need for strong leadership, not only by the UNSD but also by a body of experts, such as a Steering Group, since much of the work is technical. The work programme will be revised into a more focused milestone programme and presented to the Statistical Commission in March 2004.

JOINT ECE/EUROSTAT PROGRAMME ON 2010 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUSES

36. The Bureau reviewed the work plan for preparing the new set of recommendations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses in the ECE region on the basis of a note submitted by the ECE secretariat, which also contained a proposal for the creation of a Steering Group.

37. Heinrich Brünger explained that the original idea was to produce an update of the 1990 ECE/Eurostat recommendations. However, recent developments in the area of social statistics indicated that some issues should be considered and reflected in the new recommendations. Therefore, the questionnaire that will be sent to the member countries towards the end of the year would include questions drawing attention to the link between population censuses and housing censuses. A CIS country would be invited to join the countries that are proposed for members of the Steering Group.

38. The United States and the Russian Federation expressed interest in participating in the work of the Group on the preparation of a new set of recommendations. The issue of labelling the recommendations was raised. It was proposed that the recommendations be called “CES recommendations” since they are developed under the auspices of the Conference and will be adopted by it. The joint Eurostat /ECE work will be reflected in the introduction.

39. The Bureau noted the proposal for separating the population censuses from the housing censuses. However, several Bureau members thought that the next round of censuses should cover both the population censuses and housing censuses as they are conducted at the same time in most countries. Some concern was also expressed about the tight time schedule that will put strain on resources.

40. The Bureau agreed that the new set of recommendations should be formally adopted by the Conference. They should include information on the campaign for informing the population, reflect the migration issues and consult also with countries that are not members of the Steering Group. The Bureau agreed with the terms of reference for the Group. The work of the Steering Group will be reviewed in February 2004, including the timetable and whether the Group should report to the Conference in June 2004 (**action by ECE**).

JOINT ECE/EUROSTAT PROJECT ON FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS

41. The Bureau discussed the proposal for a joint ECE/Eurostat project on families and households, including the draft terms of reference of the Task Force, on the basis of a note prepared by the ECE secretariat. The research project was proposed by Statistics Norway at the Conference in June 2003.

42. There was general support for the project and the terms of reference. The Bureau agreed that the Task Force is composed of representatives from Norway, Canada, US, Eurostat and the ECE secretariat. Dennis Trewin informed the Bureau that the Australian Bureau of Statistics would be interested in participating in the study. The Bureau agreed that there is a need for a strong leadership in the Group and Statistics Norway should assume this role. Task 2 should be carried out by major countries in Europe. The scope of Task 3 is very large and needs to be specified. Some recommendations for the concepts and definitions should be made. Different surveys, often in the same countries, use different concepts and these should be spelled out. The Bureau agreed to look further into the work of the Task Force in February 2004 and review a progress report of the Task Force (**action by ECE**).

COORDINATION IN INTERNATIONAL HOUSING STATISTICS

43. The Bureau reviewed the issue of coordination in housing statistics in the ECE region on the basis of a note submitted by Martti Lujanen, Director General, Ministry of the Environment, Finland and member of the UNECE Committee on Human Settlements. The paper was originally prepared for the Joint Consultation organised by the ECE Statistical Division and the ECE Environment and Human Settlements Division in June 2003. It was submitted to the Bureau to seek guidance on a number of problems and difficulties that are currently being experienced in the coordination and dissemination of housing statistics in the ECE region.

44. The Bureau noted that the paper covered a fairly wide range of issues, and asked Mr. Lujanen to prepare a short follow-up paper for the February 2004 meeting of the Bureau, focusing on a narrower range of key issues relating to the coordination and dissemination of international housing statistics. The paper should also propose draft terms of reference for a possible Steering Group on Housing Statistics that the CES Bureau could consider establishing to look into these issues in greater detail (**action by ECE**).

ACTIVITIES OF THE ECE POPULATION ACTIVITIES UNIT (PAU)

45. Representatives of the ECE PAU were invited to report to the Bureau on their activities. Following the ECE reform in 1997, the PAU reports to the Conference and its Bureau that reviews and provides guidance for its activities.

46. Miroslav Macura of the PAU presented an assessment of the main findings of the Fertility and Family Survey (FFS) project as a follow-up to a decision of the 1999-2000 Bureau to be informed of the results of the evaluation of the FFS project. He also informed the Bureau of the PAU activities undertaken to implement the Generations and Gender Programme (GGP). The proposal for a research programme entitled "Generations and Gender: Research into the Behaviour and Quality of Life" was reported to the 1999-2000 Bureau.

47. The Bureau noted that the United States was not approached officially for the FFS project, where the Wisconsin University was contacted directly. In this context, the ECE secretariat was asked that any invitation to the United States should be addressed to the US Chief Statistician, Office of Management and Budget.

48. The Bureau members consider the GGP useful since it deals with important problems. However, some countries cannot participate because of lack of resources. With regard to the funding of the GGP activities, it was noted that it is important to analyse how the findings of the survey will help the government policies potentially. Without this analysis it will be difficult to generate financial support. The issue of how much official statistics is used was also discussed. It was noted that in Slovenia, for instance, the work on the FFS project was a mixture of research work, official statistics and information from the various Ministries.

49. The Bureau agreed that the GGP is an important and useful project. The Bureau took note of the PAU representatives' view that the GGP could provide data that complement existing official statistics, and be exploratory to new domains not yet covered by official statistics. It should be carefully coordinated with the NSOs. However, the project is a bit outside the scope of the work of the Conference, which makes it difficult for the Bureau to endorse it. In this context, the Bureau discussed the definition of the functions to 'approve' and 'endorse'. The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat (Statistical Division) to prepare a note to help clarify these functions of the Bureau in future (**action by ECE**).

STEERING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

50. The OECD and the ECE secretariat presented to the Bureau the terms of reference for a Steering Group on Sustainable Development. The idea for the Steering Group was initially reported to the UN Statistical Commission and later further discussed at the OECD Workshop on Accounting Frameworks for Sustainable Development held in May 2003 in Paris.

51. Several Bureau members felt that there is no need for a Steering Group since other bodies that deal with sustainable development (SD) issues already exist. Many countries are doing work on statistics relating to SD so exchange of knowledge and experiences would be worthwhile. However, this could be done under the auspices of the existing bodies. Any Steering Group that is established should be for the purpose of organising a seminar or a conference where countries could share their experience. The policy environments under which each country operates are very different and any attempt at international coordination will be fraught with difficulties.

52. Other members of the Bureau were more positive about the issue and thought that there is too little coordination.

53. The Bureau reviewed the objectives of the terms of reference of the Steering Group. The following comments were made:

- The objectives of the Group should be more clearly defined;
- No need for an additional body to provide a forum for exchange of information;
- Difficult for the Group to promote statistical research related to SD;

- Define the target group for which recommendations and methodological guidance will be provided;
- Difficult for the Steering Group to analyse technical issues.

54. The Bureau noted the work of the UN Commission for SD which provides a forum for the countries to meet every two years. The Bureau recognised that there are problems with the set of SD indicators and their relationship to official statistics, which needs to be discussed. One possibility is to bring together producers of SD indicators and statisticians to analyse the problems.

55. The Bureau decided that a Steering Group be created to prepare a seminar for Heads of NSOs in 2005 to help define the direction in future (**action by ECE**).

INFORMATION ON THE UNECE STEERING GROUPS

56. The ECE secretariat presented to the Bureau a note summarising the information on the various Steering Groups that had been created since October 2002 when the Bureau decided that any joint meetings and activities in the CES work programme be prepared by a Steering Group with terms of reference approved by the Bureau.

57. The Bureau found the information very useful and commended the ECE secretariat for preparing the information. Some proposals for improving the format of the document were made.

58. The Bureau also reviewed the proposed three terms of reference for the creation of a Task Force and two Steering Groups. There was general support for the terms of reference for the Task Force on statistics on rural development and agriculture and the Steering Group on CPI. Concerning the Steering Group on Business Registers, the following comments were made:

- business registers are fundamental for the statistical systems;
- several groups already exist and their work should be taken into account;
- the SG should not only organise meetings but should also report to the Bureau on coordination issues – revise para. 3 of the terms of reference.

59. The Bureau discussed the definition of a Steering Group. It was agreed that the purpose of the Steering Group is to advise the Bureau on work to be undertaken with specific objectives. In this context, the Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to prepare a document which defines the nature of the various groups that could be created. Reference was made to the typology of groups developed by UNSD (**action by ECE**).

FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE BUREAU AND THE CONFERENCE

60. The Bureau reviewed the document prepared by the ECE secretariat. Most of the decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference since June 2002 have been successfully implemented. The following comments were made:

Para. 23: "Sectoral concepts, definitions, classifications and environmental database
- The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to ask Statistics Norway to prepare a note on its national experience in dealing with requests coming from various international organizations (**action by ECE**).

Para.24: Dissemination of data and coordination of international data collection
- OECD will inform the Bureau about progress made with the project on creating a unique location where questionnaires used by the international organizations are stored in electronic form and on the progress with the SDMX project at a future meeting (**action by OECD**).

DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT BUREAU MEETING

61. The next meeting of the Bureau would take place on 12-13 February 2004 in Geneva. The Bureau agreed to set 18-19 October as tentative dates for the October 2004 meeting.
