

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

Second Meeting of the 2006/2007 Bureau  
Washington, D.C. (United States), 19-20 October 2006

**REPORT OF THE 19-20 OCTOBER 2006 BUREAU MEETING**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The second meeting of the 2006/2007 Bureau was held in Washington, D.C., on 19-20 October 2006 and was hosted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Statistics Department. The following members of the Bureau attended: Katherine K. Wallman (Chairman), Dennis Trewin, Heli Jeskanen-Sundström, Luigi Biggeri, Vladimir Sokolin, Irena Krizman, and Aija Zigure. The following permanent participants also attended: Hervé Carré, Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat); Ivan Fellegi, Chairman, Statistics Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Enrico Giovannini, OECD; Youri Ivanov, Commonwealth of Independent States Statistical Committee (CIS-STAT) representing Mikhail Korolev; Rob Edwards, IMF; Misha Belkindas, World Bank; Paul Cheung, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); and Heinrich Brünger, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

2. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Andrey Kosarev of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (Russian Federation); Pieter Everaers of Eurostat; Béla Prigly of Statistics Canada; Suzann Evinger of the Office of Management and Budget of the United States; and Hermann Habermann and Carole Popoff of the U.S. Census Bureau. Jan Fischer of the Czech Statistical Office and Jennifer Madans (National Center for Health Statistics, United States) attended the meeting (for agenda items nine and six respectively) at the invitation of Katherine Wallman. Lidia Bratanova of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

**II. UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME FOR 2007**

Documentation: (ECE/CES/BUR.2006/2, Add.1 and Add.2)

3. The discussion of the 2007 Statistical Programme (SP) was focused on those activities that were noted in the SP as new or substantially changed compared to the previous year's programme as presented in document ECE/CES/BUR.2006/2/Add.1. The work of various Steering Groups (SG) and Task Forces (TF) was also reviewed under this agenda item since their work is related to the activities in the 2007 SP.

Activity 1.4: Monitoring the implementation of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

4. P. Cheung informed the Bureau that an UNSD website had been developed as a depository for information on the implementation of the Fundamental Principles by countries. The website will be updated and broadened by including more information about the legislation, government structure, information technology, and other business strategies. D. Trewin will help develop the website as a consultant from the beginning of 2007.

5. The importance of regular coordination of the UNECE activities with those of Eurostat with respect to activities 1.4 and 3.11: Short-term statistics, especially with regard to the South-East European (SEE) countries that are candidates for European Union (EU) membership was

emphasised. Following the UNECE/Eurostat/CIS Statistical Committee agreement for coordination of technical cooperation, the use of the Eurostat questionnaire on Code of Practice for collecting information from the non-EU countries should be coordinated with Eurostat.

6. With regard to the adoption of the Official Principles of International Statistical Activities by an UNECE body, a process should be developed on how to bring the principles to the UNECE Executive Committee (UNECE EXCOM) through the Bureau and the Conference.

#### Activity 3.11: Short-term statistics

7. It was proposed to consider moving activity 3.11 to section 4 on technical cooperation. However, others thought that activity 3.11 should be kept as a separate activity.

#### Activity 1.5: Coordination of technical cooperation in Central Asia

8. Following the UNECE/Eurostat/CIS Statistical Committee agreement for coordination of technical cooperation, the CIS Statistical Committee is collecting information from the CIS countries on their needs for technical assistance. The collected information will be forwarded to both the UNECE and Eurostat.

#### Activity 3.7: National Accounts

9. The provision of support to the CIS countries in the process of updating the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) was welcomed. It is essential that the CIS countries be involved in the current update. Y. Ivanov informed the Bureau of the forthcoming meeting organised by the CIS Statistical Committee (CIS-STAT) in Moscow on the current update of 1993 SNA. Assistance is needed with regard to the implementation of financial accounts and balance sheets where only some experimental estimates have been made. Another area of concern is the compilation of Gross Domestic Product at constant prices.

#### Activity 3.9: Agriculture statistics

10. The Bureau was informed that the chairman of the Task Force that developed the Handbook had had some preliminary discussions with UN Statistics Division about a possible mechanism for implementing the Handbook. P. Cheung further informed the Bureau that the Handbook would also be discussed at the International Conference on Agricultural Statistics to be held in Beijing in October 2007 together with FAO and other international organizations. L. Biggeri and P. Everaers are members of the Organising Committee.

#### **(a) Sustainable development**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/3 (Steering Committee of the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development); Note on "An Alternative Framework for Measuring Well-being" prepared by Dennis Trewin.

11. Rob Smith of Statistics Canada chairs the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (WGSSD) and, therefore, Ivan Fellegi, Chief Statistician of Canada, presented the progress report to the Bureau. Since there is a split in views within the WGSSD regarding the interpretation of sustainable development, the Steering Committee asked the Bureau for clarification of the mandate. The main issue of discussion within the Steering Committee is between the future and the current generation perspectives. In that context, the note that was circulated by Dennis Trewin, which articulates both perspectives very well, was considered helpful.

12. The WGSSD was encouraged to explore the four types of capital as also spelled out in D. Trewin's note, namely: produced capital, human capital, social capital, and natural resources. As far

as sustainability is concerned and with respect to each of the four capitals listed above, the group should go as far as it can to develop a rigorous conceptual framework, based on the capital approach. The attention of the Bureau was also drawn to the measurement of current progress. Indicators are frequently used to measure progress. However, the selected indicators are those that are most relevant to the state of development for a country and/or the particular circumstances of the country. For example, environmental issues often differ from one country to another. Given the variety of approaches used in different countries, based on different policy needs, the Working Group was encouraged to identify commonalities in country practices used to monitor development.

13. D. Trewin commended the progress report as very good and honest. He noted that both current and future welfare are equally important, which reflects the reality of life and should be accepted. In terms of future work, the Working Group should focus on the capital approach. It is important that the split in views be resolved because responsible governments will want to achieve a balance between progress today and the sustainability of current actions.

14. R. Edwards noted that both views are needed. He expressed concern that the work done so far is not focused on economic sustainability of countries (e.g., sustainability of public finances, external positions, sustainability of workforces, social insurance systems). Currently, the statisticians tend to focus on environmental issues. He strongly encouraged the use of the capital approach.

15. E. Giovannini emphasised that the WGSSD was created to develop the work beyond what has been done so far from a statistical point of view and referred to the experience of the OECD in the last 6 years. Stand-alone indicators are not the best solution to measuring sustainable development. The present work of the Working Group should be seen as complementary to what has been done so far. He informed the Bureau of the special session on measuring sustainable development to be organised at the second OECD World Forum on "Statistics, Knowledge and Policy" in June 2007.

16. P. Everaers supported the compromise proposal made by I. Fellegi, namely that the WGSSD should:

With respect to sustainability:

- push on each of the areas of the capital approach as far as is conceptually sound; and

With respect to monitoring current development:

- encourage highlighting revealed preferences, in view of different country and regional objectives;
- and highlight current approaches and best practices, but not develop recommendations.

17. P. Everaers also suggested that, following the Second meeting of the WGSSD in Oslo in November, a progress report should be prepared by the Steering Committee for the February 2007 meeting of the CES Bureau.

18. In conclusion, the Bureau agreed that:

- the WGSSD is encouraged to thoroughly explore the approach based on the four types of capital - economic, natural, human, and social capital, as the basis for the measurement of sustainability. However, in each of the four capital areas, the WGSSD was encouraged to go only as far as it can in a conceptually sound manner;
- the WGSSD should limit its work to looking at existing practices in countries that have adopted policy-based approaches to the measurement of sustainable development in order to reveal commonalities, and also commonalities with the capital approaches. The group should only highlight the commonalities rather than develop recommendations; and
- a progress report on the work of the WGSSD will be reviewed by the Bureau at its meeting in February 2007.

**(Action by the Steering Committee of the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat WGSSD)**

**b) Progress of work on emerging issues in social statistics**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/4 (Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics); ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/6 and ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/25 (UNECE)

Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics

19. H. Habermann presented the progress report on the work of the Task Force. He commended Richard Barnabe of Statistics Canada for starting the work. A session for emerging issues in social statistics will be organised for the 2007 session of the International Statistical Institute in Lisbon in order to get an idea of the whole range of issues that affect international comparability. The Task Force decided to focus the work in two areas: measurement of new forms of families and households and measurement of volunteer work. New Terms of Reference (TOR) for the existing Task Force on Families and Households and a proposal for the creation of a new Task Force on Measuring Volunteer Work were submitted to the Bureau for approval.

New Terms of Reference for the Task Force on Families and Households

20. The Bureau welcomed the progress made. The Task Force, which is chaired by Italy, will be joined by Australia, Finland, and Hungary. During the discussion the following recommendations were made:

- the Task Force should not spend too much time trying to agree on recommendations but rather encourage some countries to agree on a module to use in their surveys in order to improve comparability across countries;
- the reference to the use of administrative data was welcomed;
- the Task Force should consider the possibility of not having the joint meeting back-to-back with the Eurostat meeting of Directors of Social Statistics;
- the emphasis should be on survey analysis and on developing an up-to-date classification of families and households; the Task Force should not focus on survey prototyping;
- in addition to emerging issues in social statistics, the Task Force should also pay attention to current problems in social statistics;
- Finland is ready to contribute to the work on resolving problems related to conceptual definitions;
- among other things, it is important that register based systems are taken into account; to make sure that the classification of families and households is workable; and to keep in mind that producing social statistics is quite expensive; and
- develop a few variables that are comparable across countries.

Task Force on Volunteer Work

21. The Bureau approved the creation of the Task Force and recommended keeping the work on measuring volunteer work simple and moving as quickly as possible. The policy relevance of the Task Force is important in view of the new UNECE rules and procedures for adoption of all Teams of Specialists by the UNECE EXCOM. It was also stressed that the outcome of this work should have reference to official statistics.

22. E. Giovanini noted that a lot of work has been done outside official statistics. He referred to the work of Johns Hopkins University, which has developed a module on measuring volunteer work, and proposed to involve the university in the work of the Task Force.

23. In concluding the discussion, the following points were made:

- the Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics should stress the need for making comparisons across countries;

- the Task Force on volunteer work should consider making reference to the work of Johns Hopkins University;
- with regard to the work on families and households, consider using the concept of “networking” or “analytical framework” instead of the present concept of “developing modules”; and
- consider not having the joint meetings back-to-back with the Eurostat meeting of Directors of Social Statistics.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and the Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics)**

**c) Population and housing censuses**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/5

24. The Bureau reviewed the proposal for renewed terms of reference for the Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses. Other types of activities have been proposed following the adoption of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) recommendations. The new terms of reference will expire in 2009. During the discussion, the following comments were made:

- the Steering Group should work out what kind of meetings will be convened - a distinction between annual and expert meetings should be made and explained; for the annual meetings, all CES members should be invited, while the expert meetings should be of the Task Force type with limited participation;
- the work on population and housing censuses is extremely important for the CIS countries as well as for the various CIS bodies. The topic is on the agenda of the meeting of the CIS Council of Heads of National Statistical Offices and at the next year’s meeting of Heads of CIS States. The main issue is to promote comparability of data. In this context, a coordination body was recently set up at the CIS-STAT. The CIS-STAT welcomed the UNECE proposal to provide assistance to the CIS countries and is ready to cooperate. Furthermore, the CIS-STAT would like to cooperate also in the area of migration statistics;
- the expert group should target specific issues, e.g., the use of administrative sources in the next round of censuses;
- a seminar on the use of administrative registers will be held in spring 2007 in Helsinki. All countries that use administrative registers for economic and population censuses plus UNECE and Eurostat will be invited. The quality of data will also be discussed;
- the objectives of the work as specified in para. 2 of the terms of reference involve very different activities. Expert meetings that aim to look at too many topics will not be efficient;
- the Steering Group should have an oversight role and should work mainly electronically;
- the Steering Group should look at issues related to the expatriate population;
- the Steering Group and the Task Force should provide regular reports to the Bureau;
- consider the possibility of organising a large conference for both statisticians and users;
- UNSD, with support from the World Bank, is launching a programme on censuses at a global level, and therefore is interested in cooperating with the Steering Group. It is important to create modalities for exchange of experience, in particular with regard to alternative approaches. A meeting is being organised by UNSD at the end of 2006, which will discuss the issue of expatriate populations.

25. The Bureau approved the terms of reference subject to the comments made above. In conclusion, it was agreed that:

- the Steering Group should have an oversight role and not be responsible for the entire programme;
- the Steering Group should coordinate the work of the diverse types of meetings;

- the Steering Group should define the best means for advancing the work on specific issues;
- include regular reporting to the Bureau in the terms of reference; and
- include CIS-STAT and UNSD in the Steering Group members.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and the Steering Group)**

**d) Price indices**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/7

26. The Bureau reviewed the proposed new terms of reference of the Steering Group on price statistics. The following comments and recommendations were made:
- the work done by the Steering Group so far in organising the joint UNECE/ILO meetings every second year has been extremely useful. Italy is interested in joining the Steering Group; the Joint Consumer Price Index (CPI) meeting is a unique meeting;
  - the terms of reference suggest a lot of distinct activities related to CPI, producer price indexes, export/import price indices, purchasing power parities (PPPs), and technical assistance. The Steering Group should have an oversight role;
  - the Steering Group should be encouraged to work as much as possible electronically;
  - the terms of reference should include a sunset clause;
  - the Steering Group should assess the frequency of the joint meetings;
  - there is a very well-established PPPs expert group; methodological work on PPPs should be kept outside the mandate of this Steering Group;
  - UNECE should consider developing best practices in setting price statistics;
  - the implementation of the CPI Manual is a relevant issue in the work of the Steering Group for the CIS countries. The issues of specific interest to the CIS countries include: changes in quality of goods and services; hedonic techniques, and the use of price statistics for deflation of national accounts; the CIS-STAT is interested in contributing to the work of the Steering Group;
  - the outputs specified in the terms of reference should be amended. The output is better formulated in the Statistical Programme, namely to contribute to the development of statistical standards in price statistics;
  - the creation of teams of specialists for every single activity was questioned;
  - the value added and the output of the joint meetings should be clearly identified;
  - the terms of reference should reflect the work of the Ottawa Group, the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Price Statistics (IWGPS), and other bodies in the area;
  - elaborate in the terms of reference how the Steering Group will work with the IWGPS, especially in view of the fact that the UNECE is taking over the chair for 2 years;
  - the Steering Group should identify the areas where new Handbooks are needed; and
  - organise the biannual meetings on specific topics in consultation with the Ottawa group.
27. In conclusion, the Bureau agreed that:
- a revised terms of reference should be prepared to take into account the comments made above and presented to the Bureau in February;
  - the terms of reference should include reference to all other existing bodies working on price statistics such as the Ottawa group, IWGPS, and others. This recommendation should be incorporated in the preparation of terms of reference for all teams of specialists in future;
  - the Steering Group should be assigned very specific tasks; and
  - the entry in the Statistical Programme should be amended to reflect the discussion.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and the Steering Group)**

**e) Business registers**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/8

28. The Bureau reviewed the proposed new terms of reference of the Steering Group on business registers. The following comments and recommendations were made:

- it is a good idea to have a Steering Group on business registers;
- an explicit distinction should be made between the Steering Group on business registers and the Round Table on Business Registers;
- the terms of reference of both groups should be looked at and discussed side by side in order to decide whether there is a need for both to exist; and
- criteria for selecting the country representatives should be decided.

29. In conclusion, the Bureau agreed that the UNECE should produce a new terms of reference document and circulate it to the Bureau members for comments. The terms of reference of the Round Table should be included as an attachment.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and the Steering Group)**

**III. EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF THE UNECE STATISTICAL DATABASE**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/9 and ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/9/Add.1

30. The Bureau was informed about the outcome of the external assessment of the UNECE statistical database that was carried out following the recommendations of the UNECE Reform Plan. The Bureau thanked Statistics Finland, Statistics Norway, Statistics Netherlands and the U.S. Census Bureau for providing experts to review the UNECE database. The Bureau endorsed the recommendations that will be presented to the EXCOM of the UNECE for follow-up work as formulated in document ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/9/Add.1, namely:

- stabilise the resource base of the Statistical Division for work on the database and its dissemination infrastructure at the level foreseen for the year 2007;
- improve the quality and timeliness of data;
- increase the country coverage, in particular for South-Eastern Europe and the CIS countries, as far as data are available at national level;
- improve the methodological documentation of the database;
- further develop the functionality of the database with the aim of facilitating access and increasing user friendliness; and
- increase the efforts to make the databases better known, to identify users and obtain feedback from them, and to continue monitoring the use of the database.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat)**

**IV. COORDINATION OF WORK ON GLOBALISATION**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/10

31. The Bureau reviewed a proposal for follow-up work on globalisation statistics following the decision of the CES plenary session in June 2006, based on a note prepared by the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with P. Smith (Statistics Canada) and R. Lynch (ONS, UK).

32. H. Carré supported the proposal as an excellent idea. Eurostat will support the work on globalisation statistics. Focusing on the economic side of globalisation is a good starting point. The Bureau was also informed that an EU regulation on Foreign Affiliates Trade in Services (FATS) would be adopted soon.

33. E. Giovannini referred to the methodological work done by the OECD in the last 16 years. A handbook on measuring globalisation was published 2 years ago. The OECD group is still working

but the main weakness is the practical implementation of the recommendations of the handbook. He further stressed that, given the OECD experience in measuring globalisation, any proposal for future work should be consulted with OECD. Thus, for example, there is a need for further work on the indicators related to measuring globalisation.

34. R. Edwards noted that IMF has done a lot of work in this area. He further noted that it is important that the NSOs express their concerns and that the problems to be solved be well defined.

35. I. Krizman stressed that the proposal should be consulted with both the OECD and the IMF.

36. I. Fellegi referred to the decision of the CES plenary session that “there is a need for a body to coordinate the work on globalisation statistics.” He also stressed that what is needed is a group for practical implementation and not the development of a conceptual framework. In this context, it is important that the countries’ views are taken into account. The authors of the proposal should be asked to elaborate on how to foster the implementation of the conceptual work done so far. The proposal should be supported in general but revised and brought back to the Bureau.

37. K. Wallman suggested that the authors of the proposal look at the groups that already exist in this area and what they do.

38. H. Jeskanen-Sundström agreed with the comments by I. Krizman and I. Fellegi and pointed out that countries struggle with the implementation of the OECD Handbook and the EU FATS regulation. Therefore, there is a need for a forum where countries could discuss the practical implementation of the recommendations, and review and share countries’ experiences.

39. P. Everaers drew the attention of the Bureau to the concrete recommendations made by the Bureau at its February 2006 meeting (document ECE/CES/BUR/2006/22 Rev.1), namely the possible areas of work on globalisation such as: coordinating surveys on globalisation, similar to the way in which IMF coordinates the portfolio investment survey and FATS, and OECD coordinates the R&D expenditures by foreign affiliates; defining and collecting data on head offices; defining and measuring off-shoring; and interpretation of customs data.

40. D. Trewin expressed concern about disqualifying the social issues related to globalisation while focusing on the economic side of globalisation. Furthermore, the issues relevant to the developing and transition economies should also be taken into account. The social issues related to globalisation should be kept on the agenda.

41. In conclusion, the Bureau decided:

- the UNECE secretariat should share the comments with the authors of the proposal and circulate a revised proposal electronically to the Bureau for approval;
- include in the proposal reference to other existing groups that deal with globalisation statistics and their terms of reference; and
- consult on the proposal with the OECD and the IMF.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat, Robin Lynch, and Philip Smith)**

## **V. SDMX INITIATIVE**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/11

42. The Bureau discussed the issues related to the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) initiative on the basis of a note prepared by the UNECE secretariat.

43. Enrico Giovanini explained the purpose of the SDMX initiative, its origins, and highlighted some issues related to the implementation of the standard. He also stressed that regular reports on



the initiative were presented to the United Nations Statistical Commission and that various working groups were established where countries had been involved. The SDMX initiative was created to develop standards and the sponsors are not involved in the implementation process. Each national statistical office has to decide whether to change its standards.

44. D. Trewin noted that the Australian Bureau of Statistics supports the SDMX initiative. However, it is not clear how the initiative is managed. There is a need to clarify how to involve the countries in the government arrangements.

45. I. Fellegi stressed the importance of discussing the implications of the SDMX standard on the countries. Statistics Canada participated in a pilot project related to the initiative but received very little feedback. The following 3 issues need to be considered: (i) a clear agreement on what precisely UNECE, OECD, and IMF would want countries to report; (ii) the implementation of the standard will require additional resources to develop the appropriate metadata; some cost-benefit analysis is needed; and (iii) so far a pilot has been carried out with the national accounts data – to what extent could this experience be generalised to the other areas?

46. P. Everaers informed the Bureau that the EU member states had been involved in the SDMX initiative since 2001; there have been many working groups and many countries have agreed on implementation strategies. Eurostat is one of the sponsors and strongly supports the process. A memorandum of understanding among the seven sponsors is in preparation. Overall, the process is going well. With regard to the governance issue, it is not necessary to develop very rigorous rules.

47. I. Krizman and L. Biggeri both stressed that the implications on countries should be considered and the heads of national statistical offices should be involved in the process. The steps towards the implementation of the SDMX standard should be identified.

48. H. Jeskanen-Sundström also expressed concern about the implementation of the standard. So far, the countries have been involved only at the technical level discussions. With regard to the governance issues, it is important to clarify who is coordinating the process.

49. P. Cheung pointed out that the SDMX is a good platform for global exchange of data. In this context, it is important to have a vision of its implementation.

50. R. Edwards noted that, from the outset, the SDMX initiative was conceived as a technical project rather than a business project. The sponsors' group has started to think about the implementation strategies and any comments in this regard will be very helpful. A relatively quick progress is expected for the countries that are using the GESMES standard – the other countries would need to make a greater effort. These issues have to be spelled out in the implementation strategies, including the benefits of implementing the standard.

51. In conclusion the Bureau agreed:

- that since the SDMX is a very important initiative, the Chief Statisticians should be more involved in the process;
- that the discussion of an implementation strategy is an important step forward; and
- to continue the discussion on SDMX in February 2007 on the basis of a paper to be prepared by the SDMX sponsors.

**(Action by the SDMX sponsors)**

## **VI. COORDINATION OF HEALTH STATISTICS**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/12 and ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/12/Add.1

52. The Bureau reviewed the coordination in health statistics based on a presentation by Jennifer Madans (National Center for Health Statistics, United States) chair of the Inter-Secretariat Working Group on Health Statistics (ISWG-HS) and a note prepared by Eurostat. An excerpt from the report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the ISWG-HS held in June in 2006 was circulated for information. The Bureau commended J. Madans for her outstanding work and contribution to the work of the ISWG-HS and the Budapest initiative on measurement of health status.

53. During the discussion the following comments were made:

- it is very important and very appreciated that Eurostat showed flexibility in coordinating the health surveys;
- some Bureau members were supportive of cancelling the forthcoming meeting of the ISWG-HS in November but others stressed the need for a third meeting of the ISWG;
- recently, the new OECD Secretary General indicated health as a priority area for the next years; it was suggested that the Chairman of the OECD Statistics Committee write to the OECD Secretary General about problems in the coordination of health statistics by flagging the issue from a country perspective;
- the coordination of the work with the WHO is still not satisfactory. The United Nations Statistical Commission next year could consider passing a resolution to ECOSOC on the lack of cooperation with WHO;
- there is a need for at least 4 countries who could commit time and resources to the this work; it is not sufficient if only the United States is involved; and
- health statistics is on the agenda of the next United Nations Statistical Commission and the issue of coordination could be raised once again.

54. In conclusion the Bureau agreed:

- to clarify which countries would like to be members of the ISWG-HS;
- that it is important that the meeting planned for November in Geneva be held and if possible extended to 2 days; the meeting should discuss governance issues and coordination; and
- that it is important to take advantage of the discussion on health statistics at the 2007 United Nations Statistical Commission meeting..

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and the ISWG-HS)**

## **VII. RELATIONS WITH THE UNECE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

### **a) Biennial evaluation**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/13

55. The Bureau reviewed the note prepared by the UNECE secretariat on the biennial evaluation of the activities covering the 2004-2005 biennium. The Bureau endorsed the evaluations presented in the note. With regard to the procedure to be followed in future, the Bureau agreed that:

- the UNECE secretariat will prepare the evaluation report; and
- the Chairman of the Bureau will clear the report and will consult with the Bureau members if needed.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat)**

### **b) Preparations for the meeting between the EXCOM of the UNECE and the Chair and Vice-chair of the CES**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/14

56. The Bureau briefly reviewed the report prepared by the UNECE secretariat to be presented at the forthcoming meeting of the UNECE Executive Committee with the chairman and vice-chairman

of the CES Bureau. The Bureau members agreed to send written comments to the UNECE secretariat immediately after the Bureau meeting.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat)**

## **VIII. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SEMINARS AT THE 2007 PLENARY SESSION**

### **a) Seminar on increasing the efficiency and productivity of statistical offices**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/15

57. The Bureau reviewed the preparations for this seminar on the basis of an outline prepared by the UNECE secretariat with input from Finland, Germany, and Israel. Latvia agreed to be the organiser of the seminar, and Israel and Romania had confirmed that they would prepare invited papers.

58. During the discussion the following comments were made:

- sessions 1 and 3 are not sufficiently different -- consider merging the two sessions;
- the discussion on “efficiency” should have headings, such as: (i) alternatives to traditional data collections as sources for efficiency; (ii) organisational approaches to generating efficiency such as centralising, or centralisation versus decentralisation; (iii) methodological approaches to efficiency, e.g., active management of nonresponse;
- a broad topic of concern is the management of productivity; the measurement of productivity is too technical for this kind of seminar;
- efficiency and effectiveness should be separated; the issue of effectiveness is related to the ways of improving the statistical offices’ responsiveness to the merging demands of key clients as described in para. 9 of the draft outline;
- concentrate on the elements of efficient statistical processes rather than discussing the problems; and
- consider having only 2 sessions;

59. In conclusion the Bureau agreed:

- drop session 2 on measurement of productivity of statistical agencies;
- the seminar should have two sessions - on efficiency and on effectiveness;
- in the area of efficiency, the discussion should focus on the following items: (i) organisational dimensions; (ii) methodological approaches to efficiency – e.g., active management of nonresponse; response burden and the users of statistical data; how to improve the value for the tax payers; and (iii) process approach – to also include the alternatives to traditional data collection; how do the statistical offices manage the process;
- the discussion on effectiveness should focus on issues as described in para. 9 of the draft outline; how to be more responsive to the data providers; it will also be useful to link the effectiveness to the assessment of the European Statistical System – Eurostat volunteered to contribute a paper. It was also proposed to invite Germany to contribute a paper. Consider extending the discussion on effectiveness to sustainability issues, such as investment in infrastructure and institutional memory; and
- an amended version to be circulated for comments and further proposals by the Bureau.

**(Action by Latvia and the ECE secretariat)**

### **b) Seminar on measurement of capital -- beyond the traditional measures**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/16

60. The Bureau reviewed the preparations for this seminar on the basis of an outline prepared by Statistics Netherlands. The Bureau was informed that the United States had agreed to organise

session 1 on Policy Drivers and that the IMF had agreed to organise session 2 on Capital boundaries in the revision of the SNA 1993.

61. During the discussion the following comments were made:
- D. Trewin volunteered Australia to contribute a paper to session 1 on policy drivers – a possible topic could be policy drivers with the aging of the population. It is important to invite speakers from the policy side;
  - P. Everaers volunteered Eurostat to prepare a paper on the state of the art with regard to R&D capital for session 2 on capital boundaries in the revision of the SNA 1993;
  - emphasise in session 2 that, even with the current SNA, the countries do not have good estimates of the capital stock; explain why good estimates of capital stock are needed;
  - consider inviting Switzerland to contribute a paper for session 2;
  - L. Biggeri volunteered Italy to contribute a paper for session 3 on measurement of human capital;
  - a big issue related to human capital is the aging and the skills of the population;
  - Finland, OECD, and Eurostat volunteered to contribute papers for session 4 on measurement of social capital; and
  - some Bureau members suggested considering discussion on natural capital (something on environmental accounting); others thought that it is not necessary to discuss all issues. The organiser of the seminar could consider noting that, conceptually, 4 types of capital are recognised: produced, natural, human, and social, but the seminar will focus only on 3 types.
62. The Bureau agreed with the proposed outline subject to the comments and proposals made above.

**(Action by Statistics Netherlands and the UNECE secretariat)**

## **IX. FOLLOW-UP TO THE CES SEMINAR ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND TRAINING**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/17

63. The Bureau discussed possible follow-up to the seminar on human resources and training on the basis of a note prepared by Jan Fischer, the organiser of the seminar in June 2006.
64. The CES members appreciated the discussion at the seminar. There was general agreement about the importance of human resources for the advancement of the statistical systems. Therefore, it is important to increase the exchange of information on human resources and training between the countries. However, it will be difficult to establish a common definition of core competencies.
65. Two types of follow-up actions were proposed: (i) publish the proceedings of the seminar in the form of a CD-ROM; 500 copies will be produced. The work has already been undertaken by the UNECE secretariat in cooperation with the Czech Statistical Office which will produce the CDs; and (ii) create a forum for sharing of experience.
66. It was also proposed that a web site be created on which to post countries' practices on human resources issues and training. P. Cheung, UNSD, offered to host the web site.
67. In conclusion the Bureau agreed that:
- the UNECE, together with the Czech Statistical Office, will prepare the Proceedings of the Seminar to be published on a CD-ROM by the Czech Statistical Office;
  - training is the most important issue in relation to human resources. The Committee on the Coordination of Statistical Activities (CCSA) has been discussing international training

courses; IMF is hosting a web page where material on these courses can be found; consider whether countries' practices could be added;

- a forum every 2-3 years where human resources managers could exchange experience is needed. Such a meeting should be well prepared in advance; and
- I. Fellegi and J. Fischer will prepare the terms of reference for a group to organise a meeting in 2008 to be reviewed by the Bureau in February 2007.

**(Action by Ivan Fellegi and Jan Fischer)**

## **X. MANAGING CONFIDENTIALTY AND MICRODATA**

### **a) Guidelines and core principles**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/18 and Add.1

68. D. Trewin introduced the final version of the Guidelines for managing confidentiality and microdata. Some adjustments were made following the discussion at the plenary session in June 2006. The Bureau was informed of the UNSD proposal that a revised version to take into account the problems of the developing countries be submitted to the 2007 session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

69. The Bureau was also informed that the Guidelines would be used as a major document at a Eurostat workshop in November 2006. A second seminar to deal with confidentiality issues will be organised by OECD back-to-back with the Eurostat workshop. In this context, some concern was expressed about Eurostat and OECD having seminars on the same issue separately. Furthermore, the Bureau was informed of an international meeting on confidentiality being organised by Eurostat and Italy in Rome.

70. The Bureau congratulated D. Trewin for the excellent work on the preparation of the Guidelines. The Guidelines will be published by the UNECE secretariat and will be posted on the UNECE website.

**(Action by the UNECE)**

### **b) Statistical data integration**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/19

71. The Bureau discussed the creation of a Task Force on Confidentiality Aspects of Statistical Data Integration on the basis of terms of reference prepared by Brian Pink.

72. There was general support for the creation of the Task Force. Reference was made to the Nordic publication on the use of administrative registers that would be available by the end of 2006. The Task Force should elaborate the issue when researchers request data that require the integration of microdata from several data sources. Finland expressed interest in contributing to the work of the Task Force.

73. In conclusion the Bureau agreed that:

- more work needs to be done to define the terms of reference of this work;
- the work should build on the Nordic experiences; however, an overlap with the work of the Nordic group should be avoided;
- a revised version should be circulated to the Bureau electronically;
- H. Jeskanen-Sundström will circulate to the Bureau information about the manuscript that is being prepared by the Nordic countries; some further issues could be discussed in February 2007; and

- possible members of the Task Force could include: Finland, Canada, Netherlands, U.S. Census Bureau, UNECE, and Eurostat.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and Brian Pink)**

**XI. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK:  
SELECTION OF TOPICS AND RAPORTEURS FOR THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW IN  
FEBRUARY 2007**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/20

74. The Bureau discussed the selection of topics for in-depth review on the basis of a document that described briefly the main issues and problems in international statistical work. The document was prepared by the UNECE secretariat with input from Eurostat. Since the UNECE secretariat has expertise only in some areas, for many areas information was collected from other sources, such as Rapporteur reports, United Nations Statistical Commission papers, etc. However, not all of the statistical areas could be covered. The compilation of such a document requires substantial resources that the UNECE secretariat does not have. Therefore, the Bureau was asked to consider the usefulness of the document and its future compilation.

75. Some Bureau members thought that the UNECE secretariat should not compile the document on Issues and Problems since it takes a lot of resources and does not bring much value added. Others proposed that the issue be revisited at the February meeting.

76. During the discussion on the possible topics for in-depth review, it was proposed that, in the future, the Bureau should look at strategic issues in economic and social statistics in the next five or so years rather than reviewing the current issues and problems. The Bureau also discussed the possibility of reviewing in-depth the area of information society statistics. However, since the Information and communication technology (ICT) statistics is on the agenda of the UN Statistical Commission in 2007, the Bureau agreed to revisit the issue at a future meeting.

77. In conclusion, the Bureau agreed:

- a) that in February, the following statistical areas should be reviewed:
  - SDMX initiative: paper to be prepared by the SDMX sponsors as already agreed under item 5 of the agenda;
  - population statistics with emphasis on annual data: first draft to be prepared by the UNECE and consulted with the UNSD;
  - business statistics (without macroeconomic statistics) – all Bureau members will provide their ideas by 20 January; R. Edwards, D. Trewin, P. Everaers and H. Jaskanen-Sundström volunteered to prepare some notes on the topic;
- b) in future, to focus its discussions on strategic issues in the next 5 years rather than reviewing the current issues and problems. The review of business statistics in February 2007 will be the first example in this direction;
- c) in future, the UNSD would submit the provisional agenda of the United Nations Statistical Commission for review by the Bureau at its October meeting. Thus eventual duplication with the topics for in-depth discussion at the Commission will be avoided; and
- d) that, in February, the Bureau will decide whether the UNECE secretariat should compile a paper on issues and problems in future.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and all Bureau members)**

## **XII. PRESENTATION OF THE STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES OF UNSD**

78. P. Cheung presented the statistical activities of the UNSD by focusing on the key functions of the UNSD, namely: (i) perform chief statistician's functions to support the UN secretariat in its multinational activities; (ii) support the functioning of the UNSC as the apex entity to the global statistical system; (iii) facilitating the coordination of international statistical activities; (iv) developing standards and norms; (v) supporting countries' efforts to strengthen their national statistical systems; and (vi) compile and disseminate global statistical information.

79. The following main comments were made:

- further improve the coordination function of the CCSA; good progress has been made so far but more needs to be done;
- more effort should be made in preparing the sessions of the Statistical Commission so that the effect of the discussions is more professional and less political;
- there is a need for better coordination of the statistical activities undertaken by the Regional Commissions and the UNSD;
- the issue of bringing to the Statistical Commission for endorsement and adoption handbooks and other recommendations developed by other international agencies; and
- having a list of the statistical standards developed not only by the UN but also by the other international organizations would be very useful in coordinating the international statistical work.

80. The Bureau thanked P. Cheung for the excellent and very informative presentation.

## **XIII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

**a) Indicators to measure the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**  
Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/21 and Add.1, ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/24

81. The Bureau reviewed the proposal for a Joint regional initiative on improved national evidence-based policy-making in CIS and SEE countries for achieving and monitoring MDGs. The UNECE reform plan recommended that a MDG database be set up using the available infrastructure of the Statistical Division. However, the UNECE secretariat cannot embark on the project unless the necessary resources are ensured. It is expected that the project will be financed from extrabudgetary sources.

82. The Bureau also took note of the report, prepared by the UNECE in collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP, on Assessment of Capacity of CIS and SEE countries to produce MDG-relevant statistics (ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/24). The UNECE secretariat is planning to publish the report.

83. The Bureau members made the following comments:

- Eurostat has been approached by UNDP and UNECE for financial support of the project – Eurostat needs time to consider; Eurostat's focus in this area is on the African countries;
- there are two MDG databases at world level hosted by the UNSD and the World Bank; the additional value added of a regional database was questioned;
- the MDG database should be developed according to the SDMX standard to allow for maximum exchange of data; the example of DevInfo to exchange MDG data could be followed;
- the recommendations in the report on improving the resource basis in the CIS and SEE countries should be reflected in the project proposal;

- there is a need to help countries to develop capacity in certain areas in social statistics. The World Bank-funded Marrakech project foresees some funding to improve the availability of data; some funding is also foreseen for the UNECE gender database;
- the focus should be on helping countries to generate more MDG relevant data; and
- the project proposal looks a bit overambitious, but the fact that the UNECE countries are in a better position than those in other regions should be taken into account.

84. In conclusion the Bureau agreed:

- to pursue the work by strengthening the capacity of the countries to produce MDG-relevant statistics; and
- that further understanding is needed before the Bureau can agree to endorse a project for developing a database.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat)**

**b) Evaluation of the 54<sup>th</sup> CES plenary session**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/22

85. The Bureau was informed about the evaluation results of the June 2006 plenary session. Based on feedback from the participants concerning the organisation of the seminars, the Bureau asked the UNECE secretariat to amend the recommendations for the seminar organisers. The recommendations should include: an introduction explaining why the seminars are organised; an explanation about the role of the discussants - discussants should present the papers in their respective sessions and not go into their own presentations; advice on how to prepare the PowerPoint presentations. The revised recommendations should be circulated to the Bureau members for comments.

86. The Bureau expressed its disappointment over UNESCO's canceling its agreement with the OECD to provide a suitable meeting room for the 2006 plenary session of the Conference. This cancellation, received very late, resulted in the session being held in a room unsuitable for that purpose and also caused extra expenses for the OECD. The Bureau has been informed that, the OECD's new conference facility will be fully operational by 2008 and therefore it will provide an appropriate venue for the next CES plenary session.

**(Action by the UNECE secretariat and OECD)**

**XIV. FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE BUREAU**

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2006/OCT/23

87. A note prepared by the UNECE secretariat was presented for information. The attention of the Bureau was drawn to the fact that, following a Bureau decision, the UNECE secretariat had included hyperlinks to the statistical programmes or other relevant documents of the member countries on the UNECE web site. P. Everaers informed the Bureau that Eurostat is still considering the organization of a meeting on culture statistics.

**XV. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT BUREAU MEETINGS**

88. K. Wallman thanked IMF for hosting the meeting of the Bureau and for the excellent facilities that were provided.

89. R. Edwards invited the Bureau to consider having one of its annual meetings in future at the IMF premises. The World Bank also offered to host future meetings of the Bureau.



90. The Bureau confirmed that the next Bureau meeting would take place on 12-13 February 2007 in Geneva. The October 2007 meeting will be held on 18-19 October- venue to be decided.

91. The Bureau agreed that the plenary session of the CES would take place on 11-13 June (morning) 2007 in Geneva. The OECD Statistical Committee will be held on 13-14 June starting at 14:30 on the first day back-to-back with the CES.

#### **XVI. OTHER BUSINESS**

92. D. Trewin will resign from his position as Chief Statistician of the Australian Bureau of Statistics at the end of 2006. The Bureau thanked D. Trewin for his contribution to the work of the Conference and its Bureau and wished him all success for the future. The Bureau agreed to co-opt the Chief Statistician of Brazil as a member of the Bureau for the rest of the current term, which expires in June 2007.

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