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Item 7 (c) of the provisional agenda
**Programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe**

Statistical Programme 2023

Prepared by the Secretariat

Summary

　　The document presents the statistical programme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe for 2023. It is closely linked to the Programme of Work of the Statistics subprogramme for 2023 (ECE/CES/2023/16), adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2022 and approved by the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in January 2023.

　　The Statistical Programme for 2023 was approved by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians at its October 2022 meeting. The document is presented to the Conference for adoption.

　　The list of meetings held or planned to be held in 2023 is presented in the annex.

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I.   Introduction

A.   Purpose of this document

1.   This document presents the activities that the Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will carry out in 2023. The document is in line with the Programme of Work for 2023[1], which is the main official document in the United Nations' planning and budgeting system providing the basis for allocating the budget and planning the necessary United Nations support services for the substantive work programmes.

2.   While the official work programme presents the work at an aggregated level, the current document describes the work in more detail, explaining:

• The main activities in 2023

• Why the activities are needed, and the issues they address

• The expected results and impact of these activities.

B.   Objective and strategy of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Programme

3.   According to the UN proposed programme budget for 2023 (A/77/6 (Sect.20)), the objective of the UNECE Statistical Programme is "to advance official statistics at the national and international levels for evidence-based policymaking and assessing progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to ensure the coordination of statistical activities in the UNECE region under the Conference of European Statisticians (CES)."

4.   UNECE strives to achieve this objective through four interconnected streams of work carried out in close cooperation with UNECE member States (see Figure 1): (1) streamlining international statistical work in the UNECE region; (2) methodological work to develop and promote guidelines and recommendations to enhance the quality of statistics; (3) capacity development, in particular to measure progress towards SDGs; and (4) the UNECE statistical database.

Figure 1.
Interconnected work streams of the Statistical Division of UNECE

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[1] A/77/6 (Sect.20)

5.   The work of the Statistical Division is governed by the Conference of European Statisticians to ensure that it focuses on the priorities of member countries. It is carried out in close cooperation with other international organizations active in statistics, such as the statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Free-Trade Association (EFTA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). The work also responds to the guidance provided by the UNECE and its Executive Committee (EXCOM) and global initiatives of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC).

6.   UNECE EXCOM considered the work of CES in January 2023 and supported the work of the Conference and the planned activities for 2023 and beyond.

7.   EXCOM noted the high practical relevance of the work undertaken by the Conference of European Statisticians, which have allowed official statistics to modernize, address emerging challenges and strengthen evidence-based policy making. The need for modern statistics not only help to drive domestic innovation around big data and automation, but are essential to a well informed and democratic society. The importance of an impartial and objective approach to the work of the Conference was emphasized.

8.   Ensuring coordination with other regional actors, namely the OECD and Eurostat was commended. EXCOM recognized the important role of the Conference in the methodological work on official statistics that are implemented also in other regions and at the global level. The joint session held by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management for the ECE region and the increasing cooperation in the area of geospatial information were welcome.

9.   EXCOM noted with appreciation the work in many areas, including assessing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, systems of national accounting, measuring globalization, digitization, well-being, informal economy, forms of employment, international migration, poverty and inequality, modernization of official statistics, and communication. The capacity building work was highlighted, nothing in particular the support in response to COVID-19 crisis, population censuses, modernization of official statistics, and machine learning.

10.   UNECE supports the streamlining of international statistical work in the region by providing the secretariat for CES.

11.   Guided by the priorities and needs of the member States expressed through CES, UNECE carries out methodological work by establishing and servicing teams of national experts to develop international statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of best practices.

12.   Upon the request of member States, UNECE assesses gaps in national statistical systems of the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and undertakes capacity development activities to support the implementation of international guidelines and standards, with a particular focus on the guidelines developed under CES.

13.   Finally, UNECE operates an online statistical database focusing on areas of high political importance, including SDGs, offering insights into policy issues and measurement challenges. Gaps or areas of limited harmonization in the database enable identification of priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics and help UNECE in targeting support for the development of statistical systems in countries.

14.   All CES work is guided by the United Nations *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, a standard developed by CES in 1992 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2014 (resolution A/RES/68/261). UNECE will continue to promote the Fundamental Principles which provide a basis for impartial, high-quality statistics, using the wide range of materials that were prepared at the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Principles in 2022.

15.	UNECE statistical work is strongly related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which calls for a follow-up and review of the achievement of the goals and targets "based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts" [2]

16.	UNECE works on statistics for SDGs in three main ways. First, it supports national statistical offices in their role as coordinators and providers of statistics for SDGs. Second, it undertakes methodological and national statistical capacity development work in demographic, social, economic and environment statistics, supporting the production of statistics and indicators for measuring progress towards SDGs in specific subject areas. The collection and dissemination of data on SDG indicators constitute the third component of this work. In 2023, UNECE will continue to maintain a regional knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs, including a platform providing data on SDGs for the UNECE countries.

## C.	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistical Division and Conference of European Statisticians in the international statistical community

17.	UNECE provides the secretariat for CES, which is the highest-level intergovernmental statistical body of the UNECE region and a platform for the regional coordination of international statistical work.

18.	CES comprises the Heads of national statistical offices of 56 UNECE member States, OECD member countries and some other countries outside the region (for example, Brazil and Mongolia). According to the *Rules governing the work of CES*, any United Nations member State which regularly participates in CES activities can become a member. The Heads of statistical services of international agencies also participate actively in the CES work.

19.	CES and its Bureau pay particular attention to avoiding duplication of work with other international organizations active in the region, and to making efficient use of available resources. CES undertakes work on emerging topics to support the development of statistics and brings together experts to develop products, such as statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of good practice, which often have a global impact. Through CES countries share resources for statistical development by exchanging expertise and using an international pool of experts.

20.	The UNECE statistical work is driven by the priorities of CES member countries, as well as by the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Statistical Commission.
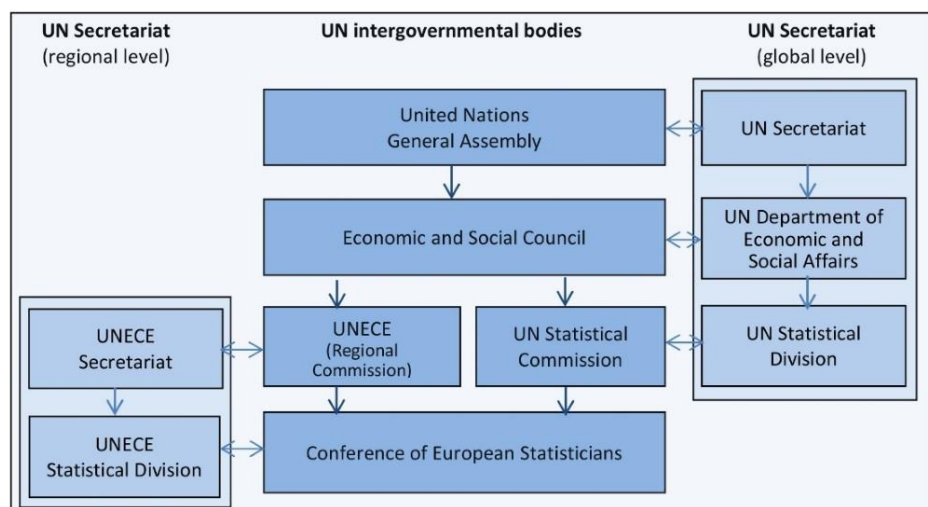
21.	In addition, general guidance is given by UNECE EXCOM, the UN Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

22.	A diagrammatic representation of the UNECE Statistical Division and CES within the United Nations institutional structure is shown in Figure 2.

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[2] See: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld, para. 74

Figure 2
Conference of European Statisticians and the UNECE Statistical Division in the United Nations intergovernmental structure

23.   UNECE cooperates closely with other international and supranational organizations active in the region, such as OECD, Eurostat, EFTA, CIS-Stat, IMF, the World Bank, as well as United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds, related organizations or other United Nations bodies wherever relevant. The cooperation takes the form of joint meetings, joint capacity development projects or activities, partnership in developing recommendations and guidelines, and contribution to the work of the CES task forces and task teams. The regional cooperation includes co-chairing the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics in Europe and Central Asia, which comprises UN and non-UN bodies active in statistics at the regional level, as well as focal points on data and statistics from UN country teams.

24.   Many activities and methodological work are undertaken jointly with Eurostat and OECD allowing efficient use of resources and ensuring that all countries of the region benefit from the ongoing international statistical work in emerging areas. The activities are thoroughly discussed to avoid duplication of effort and, in case of joint work, to have a clear division of labour building on the strengths and different membership of the participating organizations.

25.   The UNECE region is diverse, comprising both developed and developing statistical systems. This diversity provides a good basis to deal with new and emerging issues while ensuring that the results of the work are applicable in countries with different levels of statistical development. The exchange of knowledge, practices, new developments and challenges provided by CES is enriching to all participants. There are several examples of issues that have first been raised in the countries with developing statistical systems which have turned out to also be of high interest to countries with more advanced systems, and which have resulted in tools that are useful for all countries in the region and beyond (e.g. the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Generic Law of Official Statistics).

II.   Annual programme of work

26.   In 2023, UNECE statistical work will focus on the following priorities: statistics for SDGs; economy and globalization; population and migration, gender, poverty and inequalities; environment, climate change, hazardous events and disasters, circular economy; modernization of official statistics, and strategic and managerial issues. Capacity development will focus on areas highlighted by assessments of statistical systems.

A. Streamlining international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

27. Coordination of international statistical work in the region is a key task for CES aiming to avoid duplication of work, find synergies, use resources efficiently and reduce the burden on national statistical offices. CES and its Bureau regularly discuss international statistical work in the region, carry out in-depth reviews and organize seminars to explore foundational issues and emerging topics in official statistics. CES endorses the main outputs, guidelines and recommendations prepared under its work programme.

28. At its annual plenary session, CES discusses selected emerging topics of high interest to the heads of NSOs. The topics are selected by the CES Bureau based on interest expressed by countries and taking into account the latest developments and most urgent priorities.

29. The CES Bureau will steer the statistical work under the Conference and will meet twice in 2023 to review selected statistical areas in depth, including data ethics, hard-to-reach groups in administrative sources, measurement of well-being, and social cohesion. Some of the in-depth reviews carried out earlier by the Bureau will lead to follow-up work in 2023:

- Following the in-depth review of measuring circular economy in February 2020, a Task Force is drafting practical guidelines for measuring circular economy, including clarification of key terms and definitions, and identification of key statistics, indicators and data sources. The Task Force is planning to submit the guidelines to CES for approval in June 2023.

- Following the in-depth review of on non-observed/informal economy in October 2021, the UNECE Steering Group on National Accounts will collect and analyse the experiences of UNECE member countries in measuring informal economy, identify good practices and develop practical guidance in this area.

- Following the in-depth review of subjective poverty measures in October 2021, a Task Force is developing a guide on measuring subjective poverty, including a set of subjective poverty indicators that could be used for international comparison. The guide is planned to be presented to CES for endorsement in 2024.

- The in-depth review on collaboration with private sector data providers led to a seminar during the 2022 CES plenary session and the adoption of a CES *Position statement on the access to data held by the private sector for purposes of official statistics*. Further work on supporting NSOs in their collaboration with private data providers will be undertaken in 2023.

30. The CES Bureau has been the custodian of the widely used *Classification of Statistical Activities.* An updated version of CSA was prepared in 2022. It was endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in 2023 as an international standard classification and will be included in the International Family of Classifications. With this, the custodianship of the classification is transferred to UNSD.

B. Methodological work on statistical standards, guidelines and recommendations

31. The aim of the methodological work is to develop and promote international standards, guidelines and recommendations to respond to countries' demands to improve the quality and comparability of official statistics and efficiency of statistical production. The areas of methodological work are presented in summary form on Figure 3.

32. The methodological work is conducted by teams of specialists set up by CES or its Bureau for a particular task with concrete terms of reference, membership, output, timeframe and a sunset clause. The Statistical Division of UNECE convenes, mobilizes and manages these groups, working with them to facilitate turning their knowledge and experience into international statistical standards, guidelines, recommendations and repositories of best practices. UNECE acts as the secretariat for the teams and provides tools such as wikis (which allow common working spaces and discussion forums) and teleconferences to connect

experts and foster collaboration. Some teams of specialists use modern working methods such as sprints to deliver results in a short time frame. The use of virtual forms of collaboration has been steadily increasing. This trend will continue based on the experiences acquired with online work during the Covid-19 restrictions. At the same time, face-to-face meetings will resume providing an effective way of international collaboration to maintain team spirit and motivation.

33.   To ensure high quality and relevance, the standards, recommendations and guidelines developed by the CES teams of specialists are consulted among all CES members (close to 70 countries from the UNECE region and beyond) before endorsement by the Conference.

34.   The following four task forces plan to submit their recommendations for endorsement to the CES plenary session in 2023: core values of official statistics, data stewardship, measuring circular economy, and hazardous events and disasters.

Figure 3.
Methodological work by the UNECE Statistical Division

1.   **Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals**

35.   The statistical work of UNECE encompasses all SDGs, supporting national statistical offices to facilitate country-led reporting of statistics for SDGs. In 2023, work will continue to enhance the **UNECE regional platform for data on SDG indicators** launched in 2020. UNECE is also maintaining a *knowledge hub on statistics for SDGs* where more detailed information about its work in this area, as well as useful resources for experts, is available.

36.   In 2021 the Conference endorsed a 2nd edition of its flagship publication, the *CES Road Map on Statistics for SDGs* that is widely used by countries and international

organizations. In 2023 the focus will be on supporting countries in implementing the second edition of the Road Map. UNECE work in this area is steered and coordinated through the CES Steering Group on statistics for SDGs that establishes priorities and identifies concrete actions and tools that can support countries in their work in this area.

37.   A Task Team on statistical capacity development has prepared a matrix as a self-assessment tool for statistical offices to identify their needs and priorities for capacity development. The Task Team will improve the matrix based on pilot testing in some countries (recipients of capacity development), possibly extending its use to other producers in the statistical system and to the potential donors.

38.   Another Task Team is planning to pilot automatic data transmission to the UNSD DataLab, and use the results to compare the data provided by countries and data provided by international organizations responsible for selected SDG indicators. Webinars are planned to be organised focusing on specific areas of interest related to statistics for SDGs, such as taxonomy of SDG indicators, communication with policy makers, and other topics.

39.   In 2020, UNECE launched its regional platform for data on SDG indicators, which consists of a dashboard and database of selected SDG indicators in English and Russian, and a knowledge hub. In 2023, the dashboard and database will be further enhanced and their coverage of indicators expanded.

40.   Since 2020, the Statistical Division is preparing an annual **report on progress with SDGs**. Using internationally available data and an advanced statistical methodology commonly used by all five United Nations regional commissions, the 2023 report will assess the UNECE region's progress towards the goals and targets. It will be prepared in cooperation with the agencies and country teams represented in the Regional Coordination Group on Data and Statistics for Europe and Central Asia.

41.   The Statistical Division also undertakes methodological work and national statistical capacity development on demographic, social, economic, and environment statistics to inform policy decisions related to SDGs. The thematic work is described below in the respective sections.

2.   Economy, globalization and well-being

42.   UNECE works with countries to develop and implement international standards and recommendations to improve the quality and comparability of economic statistics, which are a prerequisite for the compilation of many SDG indicators, including those with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the denominator. UNECE will also contribute to Beyond GDP initiative. The main priority areas for 2023 include measuring economic growth, well-being and sustainability; globalization; digitalization; informal economy, statistical business registers; quality of employment and new forms of employment; and price statistics.

43.   UNECE promotes the implementation and update of the 2008 System of National Accounts (2008 SNA) to enable the provision of high-quality data for economic analysis and policies. The meetings of the Group of Experts on National Accounts (organized jointly with Eurostat and OECD) will inform countries of the progress towards 2025 SNA, seek feedback and facilitate the testing of the draft recommendations developed by the task teams working on the SNA research agenda in measuring globalization, digitalization, well-being and sustainability, informal economy and communication. Issues related to Beyond GDP initiative, measuring SDGs and post-Covid recovery will be also addressed by the Group. UNECE will continue to support the implementation of the SNA and consultation and testing of the SNA Update recommendations in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) and South-East Europe (SEE) in cooperation with other regional partners. A special session for EECCA and SEE countries will be organized in 2023 to ensure the involvement of the countries in the consultation and testing of the SNA Update recommendations that are most relevant for this region.

44.   Better measures are needed to link economic development to broader framework of measuring well-being and sustainability. UNECE has published several Guides to help countries construct internationally comparable statistics on human capital, unpaid household

service work and education and training. These will become part of the Updated SNA. In 2023, UNECE continues to facilitate the implementation of these Guides.

45.   In 2021 UNECE has launched an online inventory of satellite accounts produced by countries to facilitate sharing experience and best practice. In 2023 UNECE will again update the inventory, which will also be used as a tool for baseline assessment and evaluation of countries abilities' to produce the extended accounts included in the 2025 SNA Update.

46.   In a globalized world, enterprises operate in complex value chains that span multiple countries making "national" accounting increasingly challenging. The exchange of economic data between countries for statistical purposes is, therefore, becoming a necessity, as identified in the *Guide to Measuring Global Production* (UNECE, 2015). In 2021, UNECE published the *Guide to Sharing Economic Data in Official Statistics*. In 2023, UNECE will promote the implementation of the Guides and the exchange of experience between countries in this area. The Group of Experts on National Accounts will serve as a forum for the network of experts on multinational enterprise groups.

47.   UNECE will continue to collaborate with other international expert groups dealing with the impact of globalization on economic statistics, such as the United Nations Committee of Experts on Business and Trade Statistics; the UN Network of Economic Statisticians; the Integrated Global Accounts project of Eurostat, and various OECD expert groups.

48.   UNECE,   in   cooperation   with   the   International   Labour   Organization (ILO), Eurostat, IMF, OECD and other partners, promotes the implementation of international recommendations on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). CPI plays an important role in policymaking and is widely used for indexation of wages, pensions and social security allowances. Work in 2023 will follow up on the *Guide on producing CPI under lockdown* (2021) to assist countries in compiling CPI during and after lockdown periods. The 2023 biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on CPI will discuss new data sources (scanner data and web scraped data), expenditure weights in the CPI, quality adjustment methods, CPIs for different groups of households, and the role of CPI in measuring the digital economy and well-being.

49.   Together with Eurostat and OECD, UNECE supports the development of statistical business registers which are indispensable for efficient data collection and production of economic statistics. UNECE supports the implementation of the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* (UNECE, 2015) and *Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics* (UNECE, 2019) in national statistical offices. In 2023, UNECE will address particular challenges in EECCA countries, explore possible links with employment statistics and begin the preparation of the biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on Business Registers in 2024, jointly with Eurostat and OECD.

50.   UNECE, jointly with Eurostat, ILO and OECD, contributes to the international work on measuring quality of employment responding to the demand for data on the qualitative aspects of employment beyond traditional labour force statistics. The Steering Group on Quality of Employment will propose amendments for updating the *Handbook on Measuring the Quality of Employment* (UNECE, 2015) to reflect revisions of ILO standards, country experiences and emerging issues. In 2023, UNECE will begin the preparation of the biennial meeting of the Group of Experts on Measuring Quality of Employment in early 2024.

51.   Over the previous decade the labour market in many countries has been undergoing structural changes. New forms of employment have emerged, such as employment in the 'gig' economy, 'platform' work and 'teleworking'. These developments have significant economic and social impacts and there has been increased interest from policy makers in statistics to describe the development of the labour market. As the global community looks ahead to the post Covid-19 recovery, new questions are being asked regarding the long-term effects of the pandemic on the prevalence of different forms of employment. In response to these, the *Handbook on Forms of Employment* was developed and endorsed by CES in June 2022 to assist countries in producing relevant, coherent and internationally comparable statistics on forms of employment. The Handbook provides a conceptual framework which guides countries in classifying, measuring and tracking diverse forms of employment

relevant to their national contexts. In 2023, UNECE will follow up on topics of further work identified in the Handbook, which includes conceptual issues, measurement challenges, and sharing of country experiences in this area.

3. Population and migration, gender, poverty and inequality

52. There is an increasing policy demand for data on people's well-being, social environment and demographic change. The work in 2023 will focus on poverty and inequality, migration, gender, and population and housing censuses. Many challenges relate to the need to increase the use of administrative data and to measure hard-to-reach population groups. This area of work is of particular importance for monitoring progress towards SDGs since many indicators require population data in the denominator and should be disaggregated by sex, migratory status and other variables. In February 2023, the CES Bureau will conduct an in-depth review of the measurement of hard-to-reach population groups in administrative sources.

53. UNECE supports countries in preparing for, conducting, processing and disseminating data from their population and housing censuses. Censuses represent the very foundation of statistical systems. They provide the baseline information used to plan public infrastructure and services, and to produce SDG indicators and many other statistics where population is the denominator. Censuses cover the entire population and allow the production of statistics for various small population groups whose measurement is essential to ensure that "no one is left behind" in working towards the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

54. The Resolution of the Economic and Social Council 2020 *World Population and Housing Census Programme* provides a global mandate for this work. The Covid pandemic had profound impacts on censuses of the 2020 round. Many of the censuses scheduled for 2020 or 2021 experienced delays up to several years. While most are now complete, countries continue to face challenges in processing data that were collected under changed circumstances, and in interpreting the results. The pandemic triggered changes in methods, including accelerating some pre-existing trends, and countries are now reflecting on how they can harness the positive aspects of these changes to increase efficiency for future census-taking. Taking into account these challenges and developments, in 2022 thirteen task forces under the CES Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses embarked on a multi-year effort to develop the *CES Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses of the 2030 Round*. In 2023 they will develop, among other tasks, a comprehensive survey of national practices in censuses of the 2020 round. An expert meeting and capacity development workshop in September 2023 will provide an opportunity for the task forces to present their progress to the entire community of census experts, engaging them to tackle any challenges brought to light during the work.

55. UNECE promotes exchange of experience and methodological work on measuring poverty and inequality. Measuring progress towards SDGs on the reduction of poverty (Goal 1) and inequality (Goal 10) requires comparable, multidimensional and coherent set of indicators. In 2023, UNECE will hold an expert meeting to advance the methodological work on the additional needs on measuring poverty and inequality in the context of global shocks. Focus on timely provision of statistics and sharing best practices on developing complementary measures such as subjective poverty measures would support governments' policy response to strengthen social protection, social security and employment, and in addressing vulnerable population groups (SDGs 1, 8, and 10). UNECE will continue to promote the use of its harmonized survey module for measuring poverty. The work will follow the available methodological guidance, including the recently developed documents – *Guide on Poverty Measurement* (UNECE, 2017), *Poverty Measurement: Guide to Data Disaggregation* (UNECE, 2020), and *Approaches to Measuring Social Exclusion* (UNECE, 2022).

56. UNECE aims to improve the availability, quality and international comparability of migration statistics. This responds to the strong demand for collecting and using data on migration, expressed, among others, in the first objective of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. Ten SDG indicators are directly related to migration and a further 24 need to be disaggregated by migratory status. The 2023 meeting of the Group of Experts on Migration Statistics will

discuss use of administrative data and new data sources for measuring migration, results from the 2020 population census round on migration data, issues on measuring large flows of refugees and undocumented migrants. To enhance the use and exchange of migration data, UNECE will continue to update and improve its *Clearing House on Migration Statistics.* To improve data availability and comparability, UNECE will continue promoting use of its harmonized survey module for measuring migration and remittances.

57. UNECE work on gender statistics aims to share knowledge and experience and to develop capacity in areas where data and indicators of gender equality are insufficient or lacking. Better gender statistics are needed for the monitoring of SDGs, particularly to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5). The Covid-19 crisis has disproportionately affected women and girls, reversing gains towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. High-quality gender statistics are critical for monitoring the long-term social and economic impacts of the pandemic on women and men and for developing gender-responsive mitigation and recovery policies. In 2023, the UNECE Group of Experts on Gender Statistics will follow up on the implementation of *its Guidance on measuring the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women and men,* and discuss new methodological work on emerging issues and the production of gender statistics for SDGs and Covid-19 recovery. UNECE will continue to promote the national application of its *toolkit for training users of gender statistics* and *Guidance on Communicating Gender Statistics*.

58. In 2022, the UNECE Task Force on Statistics on Children, Adolescents and Youth published guidance that provides recommendations for more harmonized definitions, methodologies and approaches across the countries participating in the CES. The Guidance addresses statistics on children and youth generally, and also focuses on three topics: (a) violence against children; (b) children in alternative care; and (c) children with disabilities. In 2023, UNECE will promote the national application of the Guidance and continue methodological work including through the exchange of national experiences and best practices and structured collaboration among international organizations producing statistics on children.

4. Environment, climate change and hazardous events and disasters

59. UNECE activities in this domain aim to improve statistics that are of high relevance to environment policies and required to derive many SDG indicators. The main priorities in 2023 will include climate change-related statistics and indicators, environment statistics, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), statistics related to hazardous events and disasters (including the Covid-19 pandemic) and measuring circular economy.

60. Among the three pillars of sustainable development – economy, society and environment – data availability for the environmental pillar is the lowest. UN Environment estimates that for about 58 per cent of the environment-related SDG indicators there is insufficient data, making it difficult to assess progress and understand the environmental challenges[3]. Providing data on environment-related SDGs (such as Goals 6, 14 and 15) is a challenge for all countries, especially those with less developed statistical systems. The Joint Task Force (JTF) of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy (CEP) and CES will continue to support the improvement of the production and quality of environment statistics in EECCA and SEE countries, in line with the *UNECE Guidelines for the Application of Environmental Indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia*. The Guidelines are currently under review to align them with SDG indicators, the United Nations Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES) and SEEA. This work will result in a revised set of indicators and statistics recommended for regular production in the region. The work contributes to the pan-European Shared Environmental Information System and is carried out in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency, Eurostat and UNSD.

61. UNECE supports the use of the global System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) in the region, jointly with OECD. This includes building capacity in

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[3] 'Measuring Progress: Environment and the SDGs (UNEP, 2021).
https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/measuring-progress-environment-and-sdgs

support of SEEA, providing a forum for exchange of knowledge and experience, assessing data availability and developing methods and sources for the necessary data. In 2023 the work will continue with a focus on identifying new techniques and data sources for compiling SEEA accounts (including Ecosystem Accounts), policy uses, communication strategies and coordination of work in the region. UNECE will also support building capacity for environment statistics and SEEA in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

62.   As climate change is affecting all aspects of the economy and society, more and more data from national statistical offices are needed for climate-related policies and analyses. The UNECE annual Expert Forum for producers and users of climate change related statistics provides a platform for collaborating, sharing ideas and experience, discussing concepts and measurement issues, and identifying areas where practical guidance is needed. In 2023, a dedicated Task Force will be developing guidance on the role of NSOs in achieving national climate objectives – the reporting under the Paris Agreement, meeting information needs of national policymaking in the areas of climate change adaptation and mitigation, and informing the public about climate-related issues. The UNECE Steering Group will continue to collect good practices in climate change-related statistics through a wiki platform and an annual good practice sharing exercise "Climate Change-Related Statistics in Practice", and support the implementation of the *CES Recommendations on Climate Change-related Statistics* proposing holistic and systemic approaches to the development of climate change-related statistics. The Group will also follow the implementation of the *set of core climate change-related indicators*, endorsed by CES in June 2020.

63.   UNECE brings together statisticians and disaster risk experts, including from the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), to develop official statistics for hazardous events and disasters. In 2021, UNECE Statistical Division in collaboration with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Disaster-related Statistics (IAEG-DRS), organised the first global Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Disaster-related Statistics bringing together statisticians with disaster risk management experts, researchers and NGOs. The UNECE Statistical Division is contributing to these Fora that have now become annual aiming to improve official statistics for better managing and monitoring disaster risk and to take into account the data-related lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic. Building on the *Recommendations on the Role of Official Statistics in Measuring Hazardous Events and Disasters* (UNECE, 2019), the work will continue in 2023 on statistical operationalization of the new hazard definition and classification presented in the *UNDRR/ISC Sendai Hazard Definition and Classification Review Technical Report.* In 2023 a dedicated Task Force will finalise a set of core disaster-related statistics and develop practical implementation guidelines for national statistical systems.

64.   The policy initiatives aiming to establish a circular economy are increasing in many countries and the European Union. However, there is no single internationally agreed upon definition of a circular economy and how to measure it. A Task Force set up in February 2021 is drafting guidelines on measuring circular economy, covering the key terms and definitions, key statistics, indicators and data sources (with a particular attention on SEEA and Framework for Development of Environmental Statistics) and the required institutional collaboration. The work is expected to conclude in June 2023.

5.   Strategic and managerial issues of official statistics

65.   The first Fundamental Principle states that "official statistics provide an indispensable element in the information system of a democratic society, serving the government, the economy and the public with data […]. To this end, official statistics that meet the test of practical utility are to be compiled and made available on an impartial basis by official statistical agencies to honour citizens' entitlement to public information." To be able to honour this commitment, official statistics need a strong legal and institutional basis. As the landscape of information producers is rapidly changing, the legislative and institutional infrastructure must support the development of new business models, engagement in partnerships and use of new data sources and technologies to allow modernization of official statistics. UNECE activities in this domain aim to strengthen the responsiveness,

accountability and transparency of statistical institutions to ensure access to high quality information, as enshrined in SDGs (Goal 16).

66.   In this context, UNECE is supporting a group of senior international experts to define the core values of official statistics, map them to the Fundamental Principles, and describe the behaviours that demonstrate how the core values and Fundamental Principles are upheld in practice. A Task Team will continue to develop the descriptions of these behaviours during 2023.

67.   In 2023, UNECE will continue to provide a platform for national statistical offices to share experience in modernizing legal and institutional frameworks of official statistics and discuss emerging issues posing legal challenges to national statistical systems. The work will focus on regulatory aspects of data access, governance and stewardship. A review and, if needed, update of the *Generic Law of Official Statistics* (GLOS) will be initiated based on the lessons learnt from the use and implementation of GLOS in more than 20 countries all over the world.

68.   Following up on the *Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics* (UNECE, 2017), in 2022 CES endorsed *Measuring the Value of Official Statistics: testing and developing a measurement framework.* The document included several recommendations, such as developing a user-friendly online version of the document, making an online repository of case studies, and trialling a more strategic approach to determining what constitutes the value of official statistics from a user perspective in order to develop useful indicators. In 2023 a group of countries, led by the United Kingdom, will take forward these recommendations as per a proposal presented to the CES Bureau in October 2022.

69.   The growing importance of integrating statistical and geospatial information calls for closer partnerships between geospatial experts and statisticians. An Economic and Social Council resolution (E/2016/L.28) "requests that the regional commissions provide relevant support, upon request and as appropriate, to the work of the regional bodies of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)." Following a joint CES and UN-GGIM: Europe plenary session in 2022, UNECE will continue to promote dialogue between national bodies responsible for geospatial and statistical information. Further joint activities are envisaged, including a joint workshop with Eurostat, and work on geospatial and statistical standards. The aim is to bring together experts from national statistical, mapping and geospatial agencies to share good practices.

6.   Modernization of official statistics

70.   Producers   of official   statistics   are   facing   many   challenges   and   operate in a continuously changing environment. New, timelier and more disaggregated statistical data have to be produced. The recent Covid pandemic has further increased the need for up-to-date statistics to manage as well as to measure the impact on society and the economy. The need to monitor all SDGs and to accelerate progress has led to a further increase in the demand for timely and disaggregated official statistics. At the same time, budgets are under pressure and new producers enter the arena with non-official statistics which compete with official   statistics. UNECE   is   working   with   countries   to   create   models,   standards, frameworks and guidelines to assist them in their modernization and collaboration efforts. The UNECE High Level Group for the Modernization of Statistics (HLG-MOS) actively steers   the   modernization   of   statistical   organizations. HLG-MOS   provides   a   common platform for experts to develop solutions in a flexible and agile way integrating various expert groups, projects, workshops and other activities.

71.   UNECE provides the secretariat for this work, which is carried out by several Modernization Groups (Supporting Standards, Capabilities and Communication, Blue Skies Thinking Network, and since 2022, Applying Data Science and Modern Methods), through annual projects and several modernization and sprint workshops throughout the year. A series of workshops are also organized with an innovative focus on dissemination and communication, data collection, statistical data editing and statistical confidentiality. Due to the dynamic nature of this work, the main activities of the four Modernization Groups, as

well as the topics of HLG-MOS projects for 2023 are identified in an annual HLG-MOS conference by the end of 2022.

72. To meet the growing demand for more data with limited resources, it is important to make the production process more efficient and cost-effective. The models developed under HLG-MOS such as the *Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM)*, the *Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO)*, the *Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM)* and the *Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA)*, aim to help statistical organizations industrialize and modernize their production system. The models provide a common language to facilitate communications within and between organisations and conceptual frameworks to analyse the overlap of works, which consequently facilitate the development of shared services. The Supporting Standards Modernization Group supports the use of the HLG-MOS models and leads the further development to ensure the models remain relevant in the fast-changing working environment of the statistical organizations. In 2023, the Group will work on the revision of the models and the development of guidance on the use of SDMX and DDI through GSBPM.

73. **Applying Data Science and Modern Methods** group works on how to develop, implement, promote, support and facilitate the implementation of data science and modern methods needed for statistical modernization of business processes. Task Teams under the group discuss topics such as how to use Artificial Intelligence responsibly in the production of statistics, privacy enhancing techniques, and organisational aspects of implementing Machine Learning based data editing in statistical production. The group is currently discussing further activities.

74. Without developing complementary skills and creating a modern flexible and agile workforce, statistical organizations are not able to increase and improve the production of statistics. The Covid-19 pandemic has made this even more apparent. The UNECE Modernization Group on Capabilities and Communication supports statistical organizations by providing guidelines on competency profiles, training, management issues, and other aspects needed to increase their efficiency (for example lean management). The group works on emerging issues in human resource management in statistical offices such as social media strategies, ethical leadership, culture change and skills and capability frameworks. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the work was refocused to crisis management, internal communication, and remote working, training and recruitment. The exact work programme for 2023 will be decided at the end of 2022 but it is expected to be mainly in response to the changes that started or were accelerated due to the pandemic such as consolidating new working arrangements and the increased role of communication.

75. The field of official statistics must ensure that it remains adaptive to the changing environment and shifting landscape of challenges and opportunities. The UNECE Blue Skies Thinking Network is the innovation hub of the modernization work programme. It assesses emerging opportunities in the modernization of statistics. In 2022 a core group of high-level experts discussed and assessed various emerging areas of work in modernisation of official statistics. Topics such as statistical cloud use, digital twins, rapid survey systems and several modern IT technologies were considered. The discussion focused on areas that had most potential to help statistical agencies confront the Covid and other crises and meet the latest needs of policy makers, businesses and society at large. Several subgroups were set up to further investigate these topics. 'Pitch-talks' and other events were held to identify potential new topics that are of interest for official statistics in the coming years. In 2023, the network will continue to consider new and emerging topics and start collaborative teams to jointly embark on new areas of work.

76. Every year UNECE supports two modernization projects. HLG-MOS selects these topics at the start of each year to ensure that they address the most urgent matters facing statistical offices. For example, in 2022 countries worked jointly on developing ways of sharing and cocreating training courses and material. The end goal is to develop and create a joint Metadata Academy for the Modernisation of Official Statistics. Another project was started on developing a framework for data interoperability. This framework will provide the ability to create, exchange and use data while preserving its meaning and context independently from a given system or a set of systems. The work on Input Privacy-Preservation techniques continued. Here countries work on developing ways

to make privacy sensitive data available for analysis and for producing meaningful statistics for policy makers and the general public. New work started on developing a Data Governance for Interoperability Framework. The main goal is to produce a reference framework needed to implement a governance program focusing on data interoperability in National Statistical Offices. To continue an earlier successful Machine Learning project, a Machine Learning Community was set up in 2021 and continued in 2022, supported by the UK Office for National Statistics. The projects for 2023 will only be determined at the end of 2022 or beginning of 2023.

77. Several aspects of statistics are not domain specific. UNECE is one of the few organizations that delivers workshops in important cross-cutting areas of statistical production bringing together experts from various domains for joint work and exchange of practices. In 2023, UNECE is planning expert meetings on statistical data collection, dissemination and communication, and data confidentiality, and will start the preparations for the 2023 expert meeting on data editing.

C. Capacity development

78. UNECE aims to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems in all member countries, and particularly those in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, to implement international standards and guidelines and to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The capacity development is directly related to SDG 17 "Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development" (targets 17.18 and 17.19).

79. Special attention is paid to promoting the *United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics* which provide the basis for a sound legal and institutional framework for national statistical systems. The work follows the *UNECE Statistical Capacity Development Strategy* (2018) reinforcing the principle of user driven capacity development activities.

80. UNECE capacity development activities include:

- Global Assessments of national statistical systems and sector reviews of specific areas of official statistics at the national level

- Capacity development workshops

- Advisory services to address country-specific needs

- Field projects implemented in partnership with national statistical offices and UN country teams

- Development of methodological guidance and training materials.

81. Capacity development activities are carried out in partnership with other international organizations, in particular Eurostat, EFTA, United Nations country teams, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), UNSD, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT) and other bilateral and multilateral partners.

82. UNECE capacity development activities are based on the findings and recommendations of Global Assessments of national statistical systems. Global Assessments are carried out in cooperation with Eurostat and EFTA and are used by various donors active in the region, such as the World Bank. The reports provide a clear picture of the state of development of official statistics in a country. They help national authorities to better programme the long-term development of statistics, and international donors to focus their technical cooperation activities on the identified needs. Global Assessments have resulted in action plans to improve national statistics in all countries where they have been conducted. The Global Assessment of Turkmenistan that started in 2022 is drawing to a close in the beginning of 2023. Discussions are ongoing about the next countries to be assessed.

83. A United Nations Development Account project that started in September 2022 will continue throughout 2023, in partnership with UNSD, other UN Regional Commissions, UNEP and UNODC. A range of workshops and other statistical capacity development activities will be carried out under the project, with a focus on supporting post-Covid recovery.

84. The Steering Committee of the Multi-Donor Programmatic Trust Fund to Support Statistical Capacity Building in Eastern Europe and CIS Countries (ECASTAT) will continue to finance a UNECE-led capacity development programme for the implementation of the 2008 SNA and to support statistics in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The programme, which is scheduled to end in 2023, consists of regional workshops and other training activities in the areas of national accounts, statistical business registers, prices, migration and remittance statistics. The Programme also supports the participation of experts from the target countries in statistical expert group meetings.

D. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe statistical database

85. UNECE operates a statistical database offering key statistics on member countries via free online interfaces in English and Russian. This work promotes open access to, and use of, data for evidence-based decision making, as requested in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

86. Emphasis is placed on providing data on areas of high political importance to governments and to the United Nations system, such as SDGs, migration, globalization, gender equality, population, education, employment, work-life balance, road traffic accidents, inland transport, and forest resources. The compilation of data on these topics gives insights into measurement issues and helps to identify priorities for UNECE methodological work to improve the quality and comparability of national statistics, and to provide targeted support for the development of statistical systems in countries.

87. The SDG dashboard will be further enhanced by extending the coverage of indicators and adding new features with assessment of the UNECE region's progress towards the goals and targets. The dashboard provides quick and easy access to information on UNECE countries' progress in achieving SDGs to a broad non-specialist audience in both PC- and mobile-friendly formats in English and Russian. The data are stored using the existing infrastructure of the UNECE statistical database, allowing users to build customized tables and graphs and to consult the metadata.

88. To reduce the response burden on countries, data are collected from, or in cooperation with, other international organizations when possible. UNECE has continued its work to streamline the database activities, which has increased efficiency of data collection and facilitated more timely update and release of statistical data series. Further improvements are expected in the work related to the database maintenance, such as usage of various Python-based statistical software packages. It is expected that using the Python programming language will shorten the software development time and free human resources for design of visually attractive and easy-to-use web applications. Development of data stories rich in visual elements is a new possibility. The first such data story, on road safety, was released in July 2022. It is planned to remove technological barriers and reduce the design cost of producing data stories. Use of data science tools is a key factor in building capacity in storytelling.

89. The database provides the source data for the report for the annual UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. Annual user surveys are conducted to ensure relevance and to identify new user needs. Improvements to the efficiency of data processing tools will continue in 2023.

90. The UNECE statistical database is also used to disseminate data for UNECE policy work. In this respect, the database is a strategic resource for the whole UNECE and beyond.

Annex

List of meetings from January to December 2023

Jointly with	Meeting (venue)	Date
	CES Bureau meeting (Geneva, Switzerland)	15-16 February 2023
OECD	Joint OECD-UNECE Seminar on Implementation of SEEA (Geneva, Switzerland)	13-15 March 2023
Eurostat, IEA	Joint UNECE/IEA/Eurostat Webinar on Administrative Microdata for Climate Change, Energy and Environment Statistics	30 March 2023
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on Statistics for SDGs (Geneva, Switzerland)	12-13 April 2023
	Group of Experts on National Accounts (Geneva, Switzerland)	25-28 April 2023
	Workshop on Gender Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	9 May 2023
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on Gender Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	10-12 May 2023
	Expert Meeting on Machine Learning for Official Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	5-7 June 2023
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on Consumer Price Indices (Geneva, Switzerland)	7-9 June 2023
	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Collection (online)	12-14 June 2023
	Conference of European Statisticians 71st plenary session (Geneva, Switzerland)	22-23 June 2023
	Conference of European Statisticians seminars on data ethics, and timeliness, frequency and granularity of official statistics (Paris, France)	28 June 2023
	Expert Forum for Producers and Users of Climate Change-related Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	28-30 August 2023
	Expert Meeting on Human Resources Management and Training (Geneva, Switzerland)	11-13 September 2023 (tbc)
	Workshop on Population and Housing Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	18-19 September 2023
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on Population and Housing Censuses (Geneva, Switzerland)	20-22 September 2023
Eurostat	Expert Meeting on Statistical Data Confidentiality (Wiesbaden, Germany)	26-28 September 2023
	CES Bureau meeting (Cardiff, United Kingdom)	9-10 October 2023
	Expert Meeting on Dissemination and Communication of Statistics (Lisbon, Portugal)	11-13 October 2023
	Joint Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators (Geneva, Switzerland)	16-17 October 2023
	Group of Experts on Measuring Quality of Employment (Geneva, Switzerland)	25-27 October 2023
	Workshop on Migration Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	1 November 2023
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on Migration Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	2-5 November 2023
	HLG-MOS Workshop on the Modernization of Official Statistics (Geneva, Switzerland)	20-22 November 2023
	Workshop on Harmonization of Poverty Statistics to Measure SDG 1 and 10 (Geneva, Switzerland)	27 November 2023
	Meeting of the Group of Experts on Measuring Poverty and Inequality (Geneva, Switzerland)	28-29 November 2023