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**STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

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**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS AND DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICAL  
SERVICE OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES  
IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD**

Paper submitted by the Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS

1. The political and economic changes which occurred at the beginning of the '90s in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe played a considerable role in the activities of the Conference of European Statisticians. It was one of the first subsidiary bodies of the UN ECE which restructured the programme of its work. Already in February 1990 a consultative meeting of the heads of European statistical services was conducted on the future role of the CES. The directions of further work of the Conference in new conditions of regional cooperation were determined at that meeting. Special consideration was given to the cooperation projects aimed at rendering assistance to the statistical services of the countries in transition in the improvement of their statistical methods for work in market economy conditions.

2. One of the decisions of the Second Session of the Special Working Group on the Activities of UN ECE (13.12.1990) drew the attention of the Conference to the necessity of continuing persistently the implementation of previous initiatives on coordinating its programme of work with the requirements of transition countries, in particular with the problems which can be solved most efficiently within the framework of multilateral cooperation.

3. Starting with the 39th session, the agenda of the CES began to include a question on adaptation of statistical services to the process of the transition period and integration in Europe and a programme of transition projects implementation was elaborated. As mentioned at the 41st session of the CES, the Conference reacted rapidly to the changes in Central and Eastern Europe and started paying more attention in its work to the problems of restructuring statistical activities in the transition countries. Some activities of the CES, especially working sessions, were entirely devoted to these problems. Later on, the document "An Integrated Presentation of the Programmes of International Statistical Work in the ECE Region" began to include a separate programme activity element concerning the transition countries, the aim of which was to render assistance to them in the introduction of the methods of work similar to those applied in the countries with a developed market economy.

4. Among the transition countries which started to assume an important place in the work of the CES on rendering them assistance in transition to new statistical standards and methods were 12 new

states –former Republics of the Soviet Union, which created the Commonwealth of Independent States ten years ago and started participating in the sessions of the Conference in 1992.

5. One of the first acts of the Heads of Governments of the states of this Commonwealth was the decision to establish a statistical committee "coordinating the activities of the statistical services of the Commonwealth of Independent States". On February 6, 1992 an Agreement was adopted concerning a statistical service of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in accordance with which the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States was established and renamed later on as the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

6. The necessity for such an organization was due to several reasons. Statistical services of the new states faced a number of serious problems at the beginning. They were formed on the basis of the republican statistical bodies, which had territorially organized offices and qualified personnel, specializing in the collection of primary accounting data, which they aggregated by territories and industries and presented as aggregates to the different levels of local management authorities and to the Goskomstat of the USSR. One of the most important tasks of statistics at that time was to ensure control of the implementation of plans. Practically all scientific and methodological work was carried out centrally at the office of the Goskomstat of the USSR and its institutions. National statistical services did not have experience in this kind of work.

7. Each of them faced the problem of not only completely building up the statistics of an independent state on their own, but also of mastering statistical methods and meeting the requirements of a market economy and international statistical norms and standards. This had to be done in isolation from international statistical practice because all external activities in this field had been carried out in the central body as well.

8. The first priority was both elaboration of a unified methodology, ensuring comparability of statistical data, and the organization of interstate exchange of statistical information for leading bodies of the countries.

9. Cooperation in the efforts of the national statistical services and execution, by the Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth, of the tasks common to all of them enabled a rapid solution of these problems.

10. An important role in the organization of cooperation in statistics is played by the higher statistical body of the Commonwealth – the Council of the Heads of Statistical Services of the Countries, which discusses the most important questions of statistics development in the Commonwealth, adopts decisions on the main directions of cooperation in this field and approves the work programmes of the CIS Statcommittee and the reports of its activity.

11. The Council has established minimum statistical indicators for the uniform presentation to the Statcommittee, has elaborated a unified methodology of their calculation, and has adopted corresponding normative acts establishing the volume, order and conditions of information exchange. Interstate exchange of statistical information in the Commonwealth was built up on this basis.

12. The CIS Statcommittee has prepared more than 450 methodological documents in the most important fields of statistics, many of which concerned reforms connected with the transition to international standards. To ensure a corresponding scientific level of the methodological materials under development, they are discussed by the Scientific Council composed of leading specialists of the national statistical services, other ministries and agencies, and scientists of a number of scientific and educational institutions.

13. Much consideration in the methodology was given to such urgent work as the system of national accounts (SNA), international comparisons of main value indicators, estimation of purchasing power parities, financial and price statistics, harmonization of national classifications with international standards, census of population, statistics of employment and unemployment, statistics of external economic activities, small business and others.

14. The CIS countries have carried out great work on the implementation of SNA-93. They calculate gross domestic product (GDP) using three methods, make its estimates in constant prices, compile all the main accounts of SNA for the economy as a whole, by sectors and industries, make quarterly estimates of GDP and estimates of the non-observed economy. Half of the countries make calculations of GDP on a monthly basis. In selected countries, attempts were made to compile a financial account. Ten countries of the Commonwealth compile input-output tables on a regular basis in accordance with the SNA concepts, as well as supply and use tables. Six countries have conducted a non-recurrent survey and compiled on its basis either SNA input-output tables or supply and use tables in an expanded scheme.

15. Most countries compile balances of fixed assets and develop indicators of national wealth.

16. National classifications of all kinds of economic activities and products on the basis of model classifications developed by the CIS Statcommittee are introduced everywhere.

17. More than 90 methodological seminars and meetings have been conducted, with the participation of more than three thousand specialists of the CIS national statistical services. The major part of the seminars were conducted jointly with the leading international organizations, national statistical services of the European region and within the framework of the TACIS programme.

18. To build up statistical services it was useful to adopt a recommendatory legislative act "On State Statistics" which was prepared by the CIS Statcommittee, discussed at the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS and recommended by this Assembly to the parliaments of the Commonwealth countries to be used as a basis for the development of national laws.

19. A statistical data base with twenty-four-hour user access has been created for the purposes of exchange.

20. On the basis of the information available, the CIS Statcommittee prepared about 700 reports, outlooks and other analytic materials on the state of economy of the countries, and regularly informed their leaders, economic agencies, interstate bodies on socio-economic processes taking place. The CIS Statcommittee has issued hundreds of statistical and information bulletins, press-releases for mass media, about 100 statistical abstracts and yearbooks, statistical reference-books; it also issues CD-ROMs and maintains a web-site existing on the Internet since 1996. Among the constant users of statistical information are higher management bodies of all the states of the Commonwealth, interstate and intergovernmental bodies, and scientific-research organizations of the Commonwealth. The CIS Statcommittee exchanges information with the statistical units of many international organizations, disseminates statistical information on the Commonwealth abroad. It is an official observer in a number of international bodies. Its participation in their work and cooperation with statistical bodies of international organizations has enabled the transition of the CIS countries to international standards and recommendations.

21. All the measures mentioned above have enabled the creation and development of the interstate statistical system of the Commonwealth, although not everything took place in favourable conditions.

Many national statistical services face serious financial difficulties constantly and for that reason they lag behind in technical equipment, can not retain qualified personnel and have to reduce THEIR statistical activities. Some national statistical services are forced to renounce a number of important statistical works (e.g. development of fuel and energy balance, surveys of small business,etc.).

22. For national statistical services of the CIS, the initial stage of reforming statistics and obtaining experience in solving first priority tasks on the improvement of statistical methodology of calculation and analysis of economic and social indicators has been completed, and now priorities should be specified regarding the development of statistics for the near future.

23. The solution of the tasks faced by statisticians of the CIS countries will be favoured undoubtedly by further discussion of the problems of transition countries statistical systems at the Conference of European Statisticians, and active cooperation with statistical organizations of the region.