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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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(Geneva, 10-12 June 2003)

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

Note prepared by the ECE secretariat

Introduction

1. The note on follow-up to decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference was prepared for the first time by the ECE Secretariat for the October 2002 meeting of the Bureau, in order to assist the work of the Bureau, and later on for the February 2003 meeting of the Bureau. The note permits the identification of possible delays and facilitates taking decisions for further action. It also facilitates the work of the ECE secretariat in both planning and executing its tasks.
2. The Bureau found this document very useful and decided that a similar document be prepared for future Bureau meetings and even the plenary sessions of the Conference, to help follow the implementation of the various decisions taken by the Conference and its Bureau.
3. The present note summarises main decisions taken by the Bureau since its February 2002 meeting and by the Conference in June 2002, as reflected in the respective reports. Under each decision, the action to be taken or that was taken is indicated. The decisions are grouped in two sections: I. Decisions related to the work of the Conference and its Bureau; and II. Decisions related to the Integrated Presentation and specific Programme Elements.

I. DECISIONS RELATED TO THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE AND ITS BUREAU

Organisation of the Plenary Sessions

4. June 2002 plenary session: The Conference decided that future plenary sessions should be built around three main modules, which would be run consecutively. The following three modules were proposed:

- Formal business, interactions of different bodies (UN Statistical Commission, UNECE), discussion based on the Integrated Presentation, including a short overview of issues to be brought to the attention of the Conference;
- Seminar module on topics related to foundational issues of statistical systems;
- Seminar module on new emerging issues.

It was also suggested that organising committees for the second and third modules be set up and coordinated by the Bureau of the Conference. The secretariat should obtain, with the help of the Bureau, a clear indication from member countries and observers of the list of issues to be addressed. A main paper should be prepared for each module, and discussants should be appointed.

Action: The 2003 plenary session was organised according to the decisions taken by the Conference in 2002

5. June 2002 plenary session: Periodically, discussion should be devoted to the progress of work of international organisations and their strategies.

October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau decided to continue discussing the possibility of holding debates at the Conference on the strategies of some IOs, in particular of those that do not have Statistical Committees, such as IMF, WB and ILO. The Bureau asked the ECE secretariat to invite the IOs to contribute information on their strategies for circulation at the Conference.

Action: Action to be taken by the ECE Secretariat in preparation for the 2004 plenary session.

Exchange of information with the other Regional Commissions

6. June 2002 plenary session: To improve the exchange of information and knowledge between Regional Commissions and Committees of Statistics, it was suggested that a summary report of the planned future work of other regional Committees of Statistics be prepared as background information for future plenary sessions of the Conference, possibly by presenting it as an annex to the Conference's Integrated Presentation of International Statistical work.

October 2002 Bureau meeting: It was agreed that the ECE secretariat would invite other Regional Commissions to contribute information on their planned future work, to be presented as an annex to the Conference's Integrated Presentation of International Statistical Work.

Action: The ECE Secretariat requested the other UN Regional Commissions to submit short reports on their planned statistical work. The information is presented to the 2003 plenary session as Addendum 8 to the Integrated Presentation.

Book on the history of the Conference

7. June 2002 plenary session: The Conference agreed that the UNECE Statistical Division produce in 2002/2003 a special publication to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Plenary Session of the Conference.

October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed that chapters of the Book be published under the name of the respective authors. Carlo Malaguerra as editor of the Book, together with the ECE secretariat, should be responsible for the final version. The ECE secretariat will publish the Book. It will be disseminated to the CES member states and other national and international statistical agencies.

Action: The Book on the history of the Conference was completed and will be distributed at the June 2003 plenary session.

How to make public what is discussed by the Conference

8. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed that there is a need for a document written in a less formal way to inform the staff in national statistical offices. One possibility is that the ECE Statistical Division produces its own Newsletter. However, it was decided to investigate the possibility for a joint Newsletter with UNSD.

Action: Some preliminary talks have taken place.

9. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau decided that the ECE secretariat should prepare Highlights for the Conference in June 2003. The Highlights should be ready by the end of June and distributed widely to all statistical offices and international organisations.

Action: The necessary action has been undertaken.

10. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau decided that, in order to increase the visibility of its work, the report of its meetings and selected other documents would be posted on the ECE website in a "post-Bureau" version, modified to take into account the comments of the Bureau.

Action: Done.

11. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau decided that the ECE Secretariat create a distribution list of senior managers in the NSOs (at the level immediately below the Heads) and circulate to them the Bureau documents, in order to increase the visibility of the work of the Bureau.

Action: Done.

Changing the way 'outputs' are measured:

12. February 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed that a major change is needed concerning the way 'outputs' are measured. For example, publications and manuals are outputs but not meetings. The Bureau decided to consider a better policy for measuring outputs. It was suggested that in future the achievements of the ECE be separated.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: In response to the request that the achievements of the ECE be separated, the ECE secretariat presented a proposal that an annual ECE Statistical Programme for the year 2004 be prepared. The ECE secretariat also presented the note "Changing the way outputs are measured: follow-up. Review of the implementation of the 2003 work programme of the Statistical Division". It was recommended that the ECE Secretariat prepare a short

explanatory note to explore the difference between objectives, outcomes, and outputs to be reviewed by the Bureau at its October 2003 meeting

Action: A written proposal on the ECE Statistical Programme will be presented at the June 2003 plenary session. A note on the difference between objectives, outcomes and outputs will be prepared by the ECE Secretariat and presented at the October 2003 Bureau meeting.

Selection of topics for seminars at the 2004 plenary session

13. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to circulate the list of topics as approved by the 2002 CES in advance and to prepare a proposal for endorsement by the Bureau.

Action: The list of topics was circulated to all members of the CES in Spring 2003. A note presenting the results of the consultation and a proposal was prepared by the ECE Secretariat for discussion by the Bureau in June 2003. The Bureau will make its proposal for the seminar sessions in 2004 to the Conference.

Possible enlargement of the Bureau and the membership of the Conference

14. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau discussed a note presented by the ECE Secretariat on possible enlargement of the Bureau and the membership of the Conference, and agreed that the proposal would be submitted to the plenary session of the Conference in June 2003.

Action: A draft proposal will be presented at the June 2003 plenary session.

Possible revival of the system of social and demographic statistics

15. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau was informed that the topic for next year's DGs meeting in September 2003 will be: Social statistics – needs for harmonization and limits of harmonization. It was proposed that the outcome of this Eurostat meeting be used as input to an eventual discussion at the Conference in 2004.

Action: To be discussed.

16. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed that a note on the review of the social and demographic framework be prepared by UNSD for the Bureau meeting in February 2003.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau asked UNSD to prepare the note for October 2003, on the basis of the outcome of the expert meeting held in April 2003 in New York.

Action: Action required by UNSD.

DGINS Meeting held in September 2002 in Palermo

17. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The meeting discussed the future of the European Statistical System in view of the EU enlargement. One purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the legal identity of the European Statistical System. The meeting also discussed how the various working groups would work in future. It was suggested that some information on the outcome of this meeting be distributed at the Conference in June 2003.

Action: Action required by ECE and Eurostat.

Quality Assessment Framework

18. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau was informed of recent work undertaken by Eurostat to coordinate its work on the Quality Assessment Framework with that carried out by IMF. Both international organisations will present reports to their respective Executive Boards. Eurostat also works on the issue with OECD. It was proposed that a presentation be made at the 2003 Conference.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: Eurostat informed the Bureau that a report had been prepared and reactions from countries are being received.

Action: Possible action by Eurostat.

II. DECISIONS RELATED TO THE INTEGRATED PRESENTATION AND SPECIFIC PROGRAMME ELEMENTS

Decisions on the Integrated Presentation and the Rapporteurs' reports

19. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed that the structure of the Integrated Presentation should be reviewed in order to reduce duplication as far as possible and to eliminate those programme elements that are no longer significant and contain very limited information. The ECE Secretariat was asked to formulate a detailed proposal to be presented at the October 2003 meeting of the Bureau.

Action: to be reviewed in October 2003.

20. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau noted that in some cases the Integrated Presentation and the rapporteurs' reports are too "euro-centric". It would be interesting to provide more information on what is taking place in countries such as the United States and Canada. It was agreed that in cases where there are important activities in the United States or in Canada that would be of significant interest to other countries, they should be mentioned. The Bureau asked Statistics Canada to identify these cases, for possible inclusion in the Integrated Presentation in future.

Action: Statistics Canada was requested to provide text in future, as agreed by the Bureau.

PE 1.1, Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work:

21. February 2003 Bureau meeting: With reference to the proposals developed by the ECE Secretariat in the rapporteur's report, with the aim of improving the coordination of the various statistical activities of the UN organisations and moving towards a UN system of official statistics, the Bureau asked the Secretariat to prepare a note that should address possible implications on the work of UNSD and other UN departments and organisations.

Action: to be reviewed in October 2003.

22. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau noted that the quality of the statistical work should be referred to in Programme Element 1.1: Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work. The Bureau agreed to come back to this issue in future.

Action: to be discussed in October 2003.

PE 1.3, Countries in transition in the ECE region:

23. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed to review the activities in this

Programme Element from the point of view of subject areas and not by donor organisation. The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to prepare a proposal for the October 2003 meeting

Action: The Secretariat will take into account the request in the review of the Integrated Presentation to be presented to the October 2003 Bureau meeting.

P.E. 2.1 Management of information technology

24. October 2002 Bureau meeting: OECD noted that it is important to involve top managers in the national offices to contribute to the website on the Best IT Practices in Statistical Offices. The Bureau agreed that a joint letter on behalf of the three secretariats be sent to Heads of Offices.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau asked the ECE Secretariat to draft a joint letter on behalf of ECE, Eurostat and OECD to be sent to Heads of Offices to request contributions to the website on Best IT Practices in Statistical Offices.

Action: In progress (the letter is being prepared by the ECE Secretariat).

25. October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau asked the Steering Group to approach the NSOs, collect information on the development of IT technologies and produce a paper for the Bureau. The paper should be less technical and should focus more on political issues.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: The ECE Secretariat informed the Bureau that a decision on the possible paper would be taken at the forthcoming joint ECE/Eurostat/OECD Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Systems (Geneva, 17-19 February 2003). A paper would be presented at the October 2003 Bureau meeting if a survey among countries is launched on this subject.

Action: At the February 2003 meeting it was decided that the survey would be carried out. The questionnaire is currently being prepared.

26. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau recommended that the main outcomes of IT projects carried out in the context of the 5th and 6th European Research and Development Frameworks be presented among the outputs, with a particular focus on outputs that can be useful for all members of the Conference

Action: It was agreed that the material will be included in the website on the Best IT Practices in Statistical Offices. Eurostat will send the material to OECD for inclusion in the website.

P.E. 2.2 Statistical data collection and processing

27. June 2002 plenary session: The Conference asked the international organisations:

- To investigate the possibility of developing a common system (portal) for monitoring data collection activities by International Organisations;
- To ensure the development of data sharing models;
- To give both NSOs and other data providers easy access to statistics available at the international organisations in a form allowing comparisons and usage in national dissemination programmes;
- To put in place secure and operational methods and tools for the transmission of sensitive information. The experiences from the STADIUM/STATEL solution supporting GESMES CB should be considered in this context;
- To investigate the possibility of defining a standard codification scheme for economic time-series (for national accounts and balance of payments) with an initial focus on short-term indicators;
- To work with national statistical offices to facilitate the reuse of their standard products.

The Conference asked the international organisations active in the area to present a progress report on the issue at the next year's plenary session of the Conference.

October 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau was informed that a Task Force composed of representatives of ECE, Eurostat and OECD was created to follow up on the decisions taken at the 2002 plenary session. The Task Force would come up with a proposal for an action plan to be presented at the February 2003 ECE-Eurostat-OECD Meeting on Management of Statistical Information Systems. The Bureau agreed that, based on the results of the February 2003 meeting, an issue paper could be considered for possible discussion at the 2004 Conference.

Action: The issue was discussed at the February 2003 meeting. A progress report by Eurostat and OECD will be issued shortly.

PE 2.8, Sustainable development indicators:

28. February 2003 Bureau meeting: With reference to the possible creation of a UN Intersecretariat Working Group on statistics for sustainable development, the Bureau agreed that a Eurostat/OECD letter be sent to UNSD to include in the agenda of the UN Statistical Commission a discussion item on the creation of an Inter-Secretariat Working Group on statistics for SD.

Action: The proposal was presented to the Statistical Commission, which took note of it.

PE 3.1, Implementation of the system of national accounts:

29. October 2002 Bureau meeting: With reference to the revision of 1993 SNA, the Bureau asked the UNSD to circulate the list of issues that will be reviewed in the revision process.

Action: The list of issues was included in the report of the ISWGNA presented at the Statistical Commission.

PE 3.8, Other marketed services, and non-marketed services:

30. February 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed to review the structure of PE 3.8 Other marketed services and non-marketed services next year. At present, the PE represents a mixture of short-term statistics and structural business statistics.

Action: The Secretariat will take into account the issue in the review of the Integrated Presentation to be presented to the October 2003 Bureau meeting.

PE 3.9, Price statistics:

31. February 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau agreed that the relevant conceptual work on price statistics developed by US and Canada should be reflected in the IP in the future.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau asked Statistics Canada to draft a contribution on the relevant conceptual work on price statistics developed by US and Canada for inclusion in the future IP.

Action: Statistics Canada was requested to provide text in future, as agreed by the Bureau.

PE 4.3, Human settlements and housing statistics:

32. February 2003 Bureau meeting: Eurostat proposed that the ECE Secretariat become the rapporteur for this programme element in future. The ECE and Eurostat will further discuss this proposal.

Action: To be discussed at the Joint Programme Review meeting to be held on 7 July 2003.

PE 4.4, Labour statistics:

33. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau noted that it would be useful to invite ILO to the Bureau meeting in 2004 to discuss the critical issues identified by ILO in the rapporteur's report and to receive advice on possible action to address these issues

Action: Action required by the ECE secretariat.

PE 4.6, Culture statistics:

34. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau approved the proposal for the organisation of a joint ECE/UIS-UNESCO/Eurostat meeting in 2004-2005 to establish a joint work plan for the coming years. The ECE Secretariat explained that a Steering Group should be formed to prepare this meeting, and OECD expressed interest in participating in the Steering Group, given its involvement in the area of adult education.

Action: Action required by the ECE secretariat.

PE 4.11a, Social indicators and frameworks:

35. February 2003 Bureau meeting: The Bureau observed that more work is needed to improve international collaboration on social statistics. The Bureau also noted that there is a need to establish a mechanism where the work on social statistics can be coordinated. Existing groups like the Siena Group are not always effective. Furthermore, their work should be more focused on specific outputs. It was also noted that at the next Statistical Commission the agenda item "Framework for social statistics" be discussed. The Bureau agreed to come back to the issue at a future meeting.

Action: To be discussed at a future meeting.

PE 5.1, Sectoral concepts, definitions, classifications and environmental databases:

36. February 2002 Bureau meeting: The Bureau noted that there is a growing network of national and international organisations dealing with environmental issues. In this context, OECD and Eurostat were asked to consider the possibility of preparing a document to identify the various institutions collecting environment data in order to control the requests for environment data to countries. It was suggested that a paper be considered at a future plenary session.

October 2002 Bureau meeting: OECD and Eurostat informed the Bureau that no work had been undertaken by the two organisations. The UNSD informed that a paper dealing with environment statistics was under preparation for the Statistical Commission. It was suggested that Eurostat and OECD use the paper as a starting point for further work. The Bureau agreed to come back to the issue at a future meeting, and asked Statistics Norway to prepare a note on its national experience in dealing with requests coming from various IOs for future discussions by the Bureau.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: With reference to the note to be prepared by Statistics Norway on its national experience in dealing with requests coming from various IOs, Statistics Norway informed the Bureau that it will report at the next meeting of the Bureau.

Action: Action required by Statistics Norway for the October 2003 Bureau meeting.

PE 5.2, Environmental accounting:

37. February 2002 Bureau meeting: Implementation of SEEA: The implementation of environmental accounts is dependent on grants to promote the new manual and its possible uses

among policy makers. In this context, OECD proposed to co-organize a workshop to promote this initiative to policy makers.

February 2003 Bureau meeting: OECD informed the Bureau that a workshop on “Accounting Frameworks for Sustainable Development” would take place in May 2003.

Action: The workshop was held on 14-16 May 2003.

PE 6.1, Dissemination of data and coordination of international data collection:

38. February 2003 Bureau meeting: the Bureau discussed the proposal made by OECD for creating a unique location where all questionnaires used by International Organisations are stored in electronic form. In general, the Bureau members agreed that this would be a useful initiative, although there could be technical problems caused, for instance, by the very large number of questionnaires used by some organisations. It was agreed that the proposal would be discussed at a future meeting of the CCSA (ex-ACC) in September.

Action: Action required by UNSD and OECD.