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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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Geneva, 11-13 June 2007
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

MEETINGS OF THE PARENT BODIES OF THE CES

Matters arising from the April 2007 Session of the Economic Commission for Europe

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The sixty-second session of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was held in Geneva from 25 to 27 April 2007. This note provides an overview of the main outcomes of the session, highlighting the implications that are relevant to the Conference of European Statisticians and its programme of work.

Several issues of interest to the Conference were discussed at the session. The following were the main substantive agenda items:

- a) Declaration on ECE's contribution to pan-European integration;
- b) Implementation of the reform;
- c) Issues calling for action by the Commission;
- d) Building on ECE's sixty-year contribution to pan-European integration
- e) Promoting sustainable development in the ECE region: some decisive factors

INTRODUCTION

1. The annual session of the Economic Commission for Europe defines the overall directions of work of the ECE. It intervenes for arbitration among sub-programmes in the case of major additional activities or resource changes and addresses new issues or demands that cannot be handled by the existing Sectoral Committees of the ECE, of which the Conference of European Statisticians is one. This year the Commission celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
2. Any possible follow-up to the matters arising from the April 2007 session of the Economic Commission for Europe will be reflected in operational terms with the UNECE Statistical Programmes for the rest of 2007 and 2008.

I. DECLARATION FOR THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

3. On 26 April, ECE member States adopted a Declaration for the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, as contained in the Annex. The Declaration acknowledged achievements by the Economic Commission for Europe over the past 60 years in fostering cooperation and integration and reaffirmed the commitment of ECE member States to support and strengthen the effective implementation of the organization's mandate and to ensure its continued substantive relevance, greater visibility and improved transparency.
4. The Declaration affirmed that the ECE could substantially contribute to addressing the challenges of the ECE region by:
 - (a) further exercising its role as a multilateral platform, and as an integral part of the United Nations;
 - (b) continuing to bring the development and environmental goals agreed by the international community down to the regional level, and supporting their implementation with the involvement of relevant actors;
 - (c) contributing to increasing coherence of the United Nations development work at the regional level, in close cooperation with other entities of the United Nations family;
 - (d) ensuring that the Economic Commission for Europe's work is rooted in its Sectoral Committees;
 - (e) continuing to provide a forum for open dialogue among member States and other stakeholders within the areas of its competence;
 - (f) assisting countries to implement its intergovernmental outcomes through sectoral activities and technical cooperation;
 - (g) supporting regional and sub regional integration processes in their endeavours;
 - (h) and by further implementing the United Nations' global mandate on gender equality by promoting the economics of gender as a factor of sustained growth.
5. The Declaration also underlined that the Economic Commission for Europe is well placed within Pan-European and Transatlantic architecture to continue to address transboundary issues, promote prosperity and contribute to building a common regional economic space, and

committed the renewed support of ECE member States to a re-invigorated organization as a major forum to meet effectively the changing needs of its member States.

6. At the adoption of the Declaration, some delegations called for the ECE, as part of its work and long-term plans, to promote greater cooperation with all appropriate international organizations in the region. The need to fully implement the Declaration was also stressed.

II. SIXTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

A. Implementation of the reform

7. The Commission noted with appreciation the progress in implementing the reform, and invited the Executive Committee to develop further any points which can form a particular contribution to the well functioning of the secretariat and the Sectoral Committees. Such issues could include:

- (a) The consideration of a mechanism to facilitate the identification of which intersectoral issues ECE should address;
- (b) Efforts for a more systematic review of technical cooperation in the Sectoral Committees;
- (c) Further strengthening relations with other organizations;
- (d) Developing an ECE corporate image and enhancing the visibility of ECE's work

8. The Commission also encouraged the Sectoral Committees, with the support of the secretariat, to pay particular attention to the planned biennial performance evaluations.

9. Issues relevant to the work of the Conference of European Statisticians:

- (a) Identify areas for intersectoral activities with other ECE Sectoral Committees;
- (b) The need to review technical cooperation activities (see also Issues calling for action by the Commission paragraphs 10 – 14 below)
- (c) Further strengthening relations with other international organizations active in statistics in the ECE region.

B. Issues calling for action by the Commission

10. The Commission adopted revised UNECE Technical Cooperation Strategy that had previously been endorsed by the Executive Committee at its thirteenth meeting on 7 March 2007. The ECE is selective in the type of technical cooperation activities it undertakes and limits its involvement to well-circumscribed areas of work where it has recognized expertise. The activities are, for the most part, directly linked to its normative work. The main sources of funding of UNECE technical cooperation are the resources made available from the UN Regular Budget and extra-budgetary resources. The efforts to raise extra-budgetary resources mainly consist of fund raising activities undertaken by its sectoral Divisions and Regional Advisors.

11. The UNECE technical cooperation activities are guided by the following principles:
 - (a) Linkage to the UNECE's normative work;
 - (b) Selectivity;
 - (c) Focus on countries with economies in transition in the ECE region;
 - (d) Results oriented;
 - (e) Demand driven;
 - (f) Cooperation and partnership with others.

12. Reviews of technical cooperation activities will take place at the annual sessions of the Sectoral Committees. Furthermore, in line with the ECE Reform, evaluation of these activities will be undertaken once every two years within the framework of the biennial evaluation of all activities by the Sectoral Committees.

13. In addition, the secretariat will provide to each annual session of the Sectoral Committees an assessment of funding gaps resulting from a mismatch between demands from countries and available resources. The Sectoral Committees will discuss possible sources of financing to meet these gaps. The overall intergovernmental governance for technical cooperation activities will be assured by the UNECE Executive Committee.

14. Issues relevant to the work of the Conference of European Statisticians:
 - (a) The need for evaluation of technical cooperation activities once every two years within the framework of the biennial evaluation of all statistical activities;
 - (b) Annual assessment of funding gaps resulting from a mismatch between demands from countries and available resources.

C. Panel discussions

15. The rest of the work of the sixty-second session of ECE was organized in several panels.

Cooperation for stability and prosperity in the ECE region

16. The panel pointed out ECE's indispensable role in helping countries to achieve the MDGs in the ECE region, in particular, in Central Asia (through the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA)) and the Caucasus and providing forum for permanent dialogue among all European countries, both EU and non-EU. The importance of making progress in the field of pan-European cooperation and integration was stressed.

17. The ECE has made substantial contribution to the economic cooperation and prosperity in Europe through the development and introduction of unified standards, best practices and other instruments. In a concerted effort with other institutions (European Commission, OSCE, OECD, Black Sea Economic Cooperation, EurAsEC), ECE could create an economic basis for a truly integrated Europe without dividing lines.

18. As a conclusion, it was stated that the strength of ECE lies in its practical approach by providing standards which can easily be replicated and gradually adopted globally.

Pan-European economic integration in a globalised world

19. The importance of economic integration in promoting political stability and economic prosperity was a general theme. A desired objective for the ECE region is the creation of a single economic space without dividing lines. Much of the discussion focused on how to bring this objective about. This includes the further enlargement of the European Union, increased integration among the former states of the Soviet Union including further development of EurAsEC, and integration throughout Europe under the European Neighbourhood Policy. The UNECE, being a neutral forum, can assist in bringing various dimensions of the pan-European integration process together as well as making them mutually reinforcing.

20. The ECE was encouraged to strengthen its relationships with other regional and international bodies especially with those promoting economic development and integration in the technical areas where ECE has expertise.

Promoting sustainable development in the ECE region

21. The segment on Sustainable energy policies: the key to energy security provided significant insight into the challenges facing the ECE region as it strives to achieve a secure and sustainable energy future. The panel emphasized the necessity for cooperation among all stakeholders, reflecting the critical role each plays in the full cycle of resource management and delivery of energy services. The energy security is an issue of global importance: one that is viewed as a pressing issue by member States, the private sector, international organizations and the public alike. The discussion also highlighted the linkages between energy and environment. Much emphasis in the debate over energy use has been and will continue to be focused on the energy sector's contribution to climate change given the magnitude and global impact of climatic changes. Other important environmental issues, such as air and water quality, must also be addressed.

22. The discussion on Secure transport development: a key to regional cooperation emphasised that the development of efficient, secure and integrated transport links in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe as well as between Europe and Asia is a key for the socio-economic development of the member countries concerned as well as for regional cooperation and integration.

23. The panel discussion on Economics of gender in the European economy focused on gender equality as one of the decisive factors behind competitiveness and growth of the European economy. The ECE was encouraged to promote gender equality in the context of reaching MDG goals 1 and 3 through the work of relevant subprogrammes and focused activities. The ECE should consider developing a network of economic policymakers and international organizations to exchange good practices related to the economics of gender inter alia with a view to facilitating the review of progress 2008-2009.

24. There was a wide acknowledgement that ECE with its regional platform and expertise in the gender and economy area, including gender statistics, can play a vital role in helping countries to achieve equality of economic opportunities, recognizing that a redistribution of power, care and work is the only road ahead for sustainable development in the region. The ECE

was encouraged to strengthen its cooperation with United Nations agencies, the EU and its good neighbourhood policy and other organizations in promoting economic opportunities in the eastern part of the region. The panel also recommended that ECE further develop the work of the SPECA group on gender and economy.

25. Issues relevant to the work of the Conference:

- (a) The role of ECE in helping countries to achieve the MDGs in the region and providing a forum for permanent dialogue among all EU and non-EU countries;
- (b) The promotion of sustainable development in the region;
- (c) Continue the work on gender statistics.

III. DRAFT DECISION BY THE CONFERENCE

26. It is proposed that the Conference:

- (a) Take note of the Declaration adopted by the sixty-second session of the Economic Commission for Europe;
- (b) Continue the good cooperation between the UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations active in statistics in the ECE region;
- (c) Promote intersectoral activities with other ECE Sectoral Committees;
- (d) Review technical cooperation activities in statistics on a regular basis, including assessment of funding gaps resulting from a mismatch between demands from countries and available resources.
- (e) Continue the work on statistics for sustainable development and gender statistics.

ANNEX

DECLARATION FOR THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

adopted on 26 April 2007

We, the member States assembled in Geneva on the occasion of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on 25 April to 27 April 2007, declare that:

Since its creation, the Economic Commission for Europe has been striving constantly to fulfil its core mandate by promoting Pan-European and Transatlantic cooperation and integration, bringing issues of global dimension to the regional level, while regularly adjusting its activities to the geopolitical and economic changes in the region as well as to the evolving needs of its member States, thereby contributing to the overall stability in the region.

Member States acknowledge achievements by the Economic Commission for Europe over these past 60 years in fostering cooperation and integration and reaffirm their commitment to support and strengthen the effective implementation of the organization's mandate and to ensure its continued substantive relevance, greater visibility and improved transparency.

Acknowledging the identity of the ECE region: its Successes and Challenges

Over past decades, based on their mutual interdependence, many countries of the region of the Economic Commission of Europe have made considerable progress in increasing the standards of living of their population, in integrating their economies in the region and in the world economy.

Successful processes of deeper regional integration have contributed significantly to peace and security and have served as a powerful incentive for adjusting economies of the region to a changing and demanding environment.

The increasing acceptance and promotion of democratic values together with the choice for market-based economies and the concern for social and environmental issues have resulted in a significant progress in institution building and peace in the region. This was also made possible through the willingness of governments, the work of international organizations, the strength of the private sector and the dynamism of civil society.

Member States recognize that economic cooperation and integration are key elements for achieving prosperity, sustainable development and economic growth in the region. They further recognize that peace and stability, the observance of human rights and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals will enhance economic prosperity in the region.

Further progress on both the political and economic side needs to be made to reduce existing disparities among member States in terms of economic and institutional development, and environmental protection.

Setting ECE strategic directions – the way ahead

In line with its core mandate and its areas of work as refined and refocused by its 2005 reform, the Economic Commission for Europe can substantially contribute to addressing these challenges by:

Further exercising its role as a multilateral platform which facilitates greater economic integration and cooperation among its fifty-six member States and which promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity through policy dialogue, negotiation of international legal instruments, development of regulations and norms, exchange and application of best practices as well as economic and technical expertise and technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.

As an integral part of the United Nations, continuing to bring the development and environmental goals agreed by the international community down to the regional level, and supporting their implementation with the involvement of relevant actors making maximum use of the Economic Commission for Europe's catalytic role for further intergovernmental action and forging partnerships with these actors, including with representatives of the civil society and the private sector.

Contributing to increasing coherence of the United Nations development work at the regional level, in close cooperation with other entities of the United Nations family.

Ensuring that the Economic Commission for Europe's work is rooted in its sectoral committees and their subsidiary groups which form the major asset of the organization and constitute the basis for its intergovernmental work.

Continuing to provide a forum for open dialogue among member States and other stakeholders within the areas of its competence: sustainable energy policies and transport development among others.

Assisting countries to implement its intergovernmental outcomes through sectoral activities and technical cooperation thereby serving as a bridge for sharing experiences and best practices among member States and to share actively this work with countries outside the region of the Economic Commission for Europe.

Supporting regional and sub regional integration processes in their endeavours and in this context:

- (a) Welcoming stronger cooperation with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe in economic and environment areas.
- (b) Contributing its expertise and networks to relevant activities undertaken within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Community and the Neighbourhood Policy of

the European Union.

- (c) Taking full advantage of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia for improving and strengthening integration and cooperation within the subregion and with the whole region.
- (d) Calling for increased cooperation among existing economic integration processes in the region.

Further implementing the United Nations' global mandate on gender equality by promoting the economics of gender as a factor of sustained growth.

Evaluating the reform of the organization in 2009 to further promote effective governance, result based management and a Programme of Work responding to members' priorities and needs.

We therefore,

reiterate that cooperation is key for reaching the objective of well-being of present and future generations and is also a cornerstone for political stability and durable peace in all parts of the region;

underline that the Economic Commission for Europe is well placed within Pan-European and Transatlantic architecture to continue to address transboundary issues, promote prosperity and contribute to building a common regional economic space;

commit our renewed support to a re-invigorated organization as a major forum to meet effectively the changing needs of its member States;

reaffirm that, based on a closer solidarity among all the member States of the Economic Commission for Europe, the ultimate goal of this regional cooperation is to build a lasting prosperous and peaceful region.

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