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### **Economic Commission for Europe**

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda

##### **Coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region**

### **Coordination of international statistical work in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region**

#### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### **Addendum**

#### **Outcome of the in-depth review of strategic partnerships with the information industry**

##### *Summary*

This note provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of strategic partnerships with the information industry, carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in October 2015.

The in-depth review paper (ECE/CES/2016/5), prepared by Canada, summarizes international statistical activities related to strategic partnerships with the information industry, identifies issues and challenges, and makes recommendations for possible follow-up work.

## I. Introduction

1. Each year, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews selected statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. These reviews focus on strategic issues and highlight concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and coordinating nature.

## II. In-depth review discussion and decisions by the Bureau

2. The Bureau carried out an in-depth review of diversification of strategic partnerships with the information industry in October 2015 based on the paper by Canada (provided as document ECE/CES/2016/5).

3. The following points were discussed at the CES Bureau meeting:

(a) The paper is of excellent quality providing a comprehensive overview of partnerships at various levels and a good basis for the discussion;

(b) The landscape of information producers is changing rapidly and official statistics needs to find its appropriate place. This should be based on a wider view on the purpose of official statistics, how a statistical office relates to other information producers, and who are its potential partners and competitors. The high interest in statistics from many stakeholders should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat;

(c) Official statistics will need to develop a new business model moving away from seeing data collection as its main task. Other data providers are sometimes producing data with comparable quality to official statistics in a much shorter timeframe. In this situation, the national statistical offices' role in coordination, standard setting, quality control and accreditation is becoming much more important. Official statisticians should take initiative to shape the new business model, otherwise there is a risk of being overrun by the events;

(d) The legal frameworks in countries may need to be changed to address the partnerships with private sector. For example, it can be difficult to get access to the data maintained by private companies without the legal basis;

(e) Partnerships may be a way to address resource constraints and increase the influence of official statistics. It may also allow using the tools, dissemination channels and networks of the partners. For a partnership to be successful, it should be beneficial to both sides;

(f) The importance of partnerships with education system to increase statistical literacy and bring up a new generation of users of statistics was highlighted;

(g) International cooperation can help in establishing and maintaining successful partnerships, for example, by developing common solutions and learning from experiences. Some good examples are the sandbox and work on big data under the High-level group for the modernization of official statistics (HLG-MOS), and an EU pilot project to get access to big data for all EU countries;

(h) Partnerships are also very important for international organizations. A partnership between UN agencies to align the data available in international databases would be very useful.

4. The Bureau briefly discussed the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. This initiative has been met with enthusiasm from the information industry and civil society organizations. For official statistics community, it presents an opportunity to reach out to data users. There should be a balance between maintaining the high quality criteria and adherence to Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, while recognising and using the contributions that the other players can bring into producing statistics and making it more widely used.

5. The seminar on strategic partnerships during the 2016 CES plenary session (organized by Statistics Canada) will be used to get broader input to the discussion. The Bureau will decide on further work on this issue after the seminar.

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