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

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Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Outcome of the in-depth review on geospatial information systems based on official statistics

Summary

This note provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review on geospatial information systems based on official statistics, carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 2016.

The in-depth review paper (ECE/CES/2016/7), prepared by the United Kingdom, gives an overview of the various challenges relating to geospatial information services based on official statistics and provides recommendations for further 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 on geospatial information systems based on official statistics in February 2016 based on the paper by the United Kingdom (provided as document ECE/CES/2016/7).

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

(a) The Bureau supported the recommendations of the review paper and recognized that international work on geospatial information is gaining momentum. There are many initiatives in this area, the main challenge is their governance and coordination to ensure that the initiatives are converging and have a long-term perspective;

(b) The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will review the mandate of the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in 2016 (possibly in June). This could lead to the creation of a functional commission similar to the status of the Statistical Commission and the establishment of regional entities under UN regional commissions, including UNECE;

(c) The High-level group for the Modernization of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) could consider taking up some geospatial elements in its work, for example to adjust GSBPM from the viewpoint of processing geospatial information;

(d) The 2020 round of population and housing censuses would be a good occasion for improving integration of geospatial and socio-economic data.

4. The Bureau briefly discussed the role of UNECE in the coordination of international activities on statistics and geospatial information in the UNECE region, subject to the availability of resources. The conclusion is that UNECE would be very well placed to coordinate such activities. In addition, the integration of the geospatial dimension into the work on the modernization of official statistics would be useful.

5. The seminar on geospatial information systems during the 2016 CES plenary session (organized by United Kingdom's Office of National Statistics) will provide broader input to the discussion, as well as the ECOSOC discussion in June 2016. The Bureau will decide on further work on this issue after the CES seminar, taking into account resource availability.
