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### Conference of European Statisticians

**Sixty-fourth plenary session**

Paris, 27-29 April 2016

## Report of the sixty-fourth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

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## I. Introduction

### A. Attendance

1. The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its sixty-fourth plenary session in Paris, from 27 April to 29 April 2016. It was attended by representatives from Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and Uzbekistan.

2. The Conference was attended by representatives of the European Commission (Eurostat); Eurasian Economic Commission; European Free Trade Association (EFTA); International Monetary Fund (IMF); Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st century (PARIS21); Statistical Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic countries (SESRIC); United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Emergency Fund's (UNICEF) Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States; United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation (GLEIF); University of London and Stockholm School of Economics.

### B. Agenda and procedure

3. The provisional agenda (ECE/CES/90) was adopted.

### C. Opening statements

4. Mr. W. Smith, Chairman of the Conference of European Statisticians, chaired the CES plenary session. He opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

## II. Matters arising from the 47th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/1

5. Mr. S. Schweinfest, United Nations Statistical Division, informed the Conference about the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the related developments after the session:

(a) The 47th session agreed on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators. The indicator set needs to be approved at the political level in June by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and by the General Assembly in September 2016. The work on technical refinement of the indicators will continue;

(b) The Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators (IAEG-SDG) met on 30 March – 1 April in Mexico to discuss a tier system for SDG indicators and further work;

(c) The Fourth High-Level Forum on the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) took place on 20-22 April 2016 (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). The Forum highlighted UN-GGIM as an increasingly important partner for statisticians;

(d) The High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-building for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is preparing the United Nations World Data Forum that will discuss the Global Action Plan for the modernization and strengthening of statistical systems for sustainable development data.

(e) The Conference of European Statisticians has an important role in advancing the work on statistics for SDGs. Statistical capacity building is becoming a higher priority to be able to meet the current challenges in statistics.

#### **1. Action taken by the Conference**

6. The Conference of European Statisticians took note of the main outcomes of the 2016 session of the United Nations Statistical Commission.

7. The Conference acknowledged the implications of the UNSC decisions for its work, in particular:

(a) The Conference will work towards developing a regional Road Map on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals as an input to the Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, and will undertake work on statistics and indicators for SDGs at the regional level in line with UNSC decisions 1(i) and 2(e);

(b) The Conference will continue the work on a set of climate change-related statistics and indicators in line with the *Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics*, endorsed in 2014. UNECE will provide reports on this work to the Statistical Commission and other relevant UN bodies to provide input to the global work as reflected in the UNSC decision 12(h);

(c) The Conference supported the continuation of modernization efforts built around a standard-based architecture (UNSC decision 3(b)). A number of standards developed under the UNECE High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) will provide means for increasing standardization of statistical production. In line with UNSC decision 3(g), UNECE will report regularly on the progress of the HLG-MOS work to the Statistical Commission.

### **III. Strategic partnerships**

#### **A. Introduction**

8. The seminar was chaired by Ms. S. Michaud, Canada. In the opening remarks, Ms. Michaud noted that the amount of available digital information has been rapidly increasing, providing possible new sources of information that could be helpful to the work of statistical offices. A number of issues need to be tackled when examining these new data sources, such as access, quality of data, and how to integrate these data into programs and/or use them for analysis.

9. The seminar included two parts; first an introduction to the issue and presentation of case studies of successful strategic partnerships, and secondly a panel discussion on possible way forward.

## B. Building beneficial partnerships

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/5, 5/Add.1-2, 16, 37, 38

10. Mr. J. Pullinger, United Kingdom, gave a presentation emphasizing that partnerships help to innovate and meet the challenge of increasing expectations towards official statistics. Partnerships with the information industry should become business as usual for statistical offices to fulfil their core mandate of providing better statistics for better decisions and better lives.

11. Italy, Australia and the United States presented examples of effective partnerships between national statistical offices and other actors in the information industry.

12. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Effective partnerships should be beneficial for both sides building on the complementarity of strengths and weaknesses of the partners. It is important to focus on shared benefits and outcomes, understand the different perspectives, motivations and objectives of partners. A new business model is needed. The question is how to develop it;

(b) To help to identify potential partners, set up partnerships and define the NSOs' role, a four step approach can be used based on the following issues:

(i) What is the question national statistical offices need to answer?

(ii) Who can help to answer it?

(iii) What are the benefits versus risks from engaging in a partnership?

(iv) Clarify roles in the partnership.

(c) SDGs can be used as a catalyst for statistical offices to engage in partnerships as the national statistical systems alone will not be able to provide data on all required SDG indicators;

(d) Establishing a legal framework which enables and regulates partnerships is crucial. It must include rules for data security and data confidentiality. This is an important measure to establish trust, in combination with regular feedback to partners about the use of data;

(e) Partnerships help to increase the value of official statistics and drive innovation. Among the success factors for partnerships are clarity of roles and expectations, mutual capacity building, reducing respondent burden, and keeping outcomes practical and tangible.

## C. Panel discussion on the way forward

13. The panel consisted of G. Hartsink (Global Legal Entity Identifier Foundation), M. Durand (OECD), V. Galvin (Statistics New Zealand) and E. Wetter (Stockholm School of Economics). The discussion focused on strategic choices and the way forward for official statisticians in building effective partnerships.

14. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Strategic partnerships can help national statistical offices to get closer to customers and move towards service orientation;

(b) An important criteria in establishing a partnership is whether it creates added value;

(c) Private sector partners are aware of the value of their data and may not be inclined to give it away to statistical offices for free. The private sector may also be concerned about confidentiality and revealing business secrets by giving out data. It may take time to convince them that statistical offices can be a reliable partner maintaining a strict confidentiality policy;

(d) There is always a risk that the business interests of the private sector partner may change and they withdraw from the partnership. In such a case, it will be difficult for the statistical office to ensure continuity and consistency of time series. The partnerships should not jeopardize existing time series;

(e) Possible topics that could be discussed in future are partnerships between national statistical offices and software providers, and partnerships of international organizations.

#### **1. Action taken by the Conference**

15. The Conference recognized the diversity of issues around partnerships with the information industry and considered it useful to undertake further work on the following issues related to strategic partnerships in official statistics:

(a) Collecting examples of successful (and unsuccessful) partnerships and finding low cost opportunities to share experience in building partnerships. In the longer term, this could lead to building up a community of practice and developing guidance on how to build successful partnerships;

(b) Legal framework that can facilitate or hinder building efficient partnerships, and its links with the statistical law;

(c) How to build a dialogue with privacy commissions and civil society;

(d) Strategic opportunities to build partnerships with other data providers and data users in the context of measuring SDGs.

16. The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the proposals and issues raised during the seminar. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions. The Conference encouraged CES members to use the papers and ideas produced by the seminar.

## **IV. Work of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics**

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/9, 10

17. Mr. D. Kalisch, Australia, representing the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS), presented the annual report of the Group including its main achievements and forthcoming priorities. He noted that in 2015 the work focused on the implementation of the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA) and exploring new data sources, such as carrying out experiments with Big Data. Last year about 600 people from 50 countries were involved in the modernization activities.

18. In 2016, the modernization work will focus on data integration, open metadata, developing a modernization roadmap and maturity model, CSPA implementation, risk management and machine learning. To ensure that the work reflects countries' priorities, a pilot survey of national statistical offices' investment plans was carried out. The survey will be repeated on a larger scale in 2016 to identify emerging priorities and common areas of interest.

19. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) It is important to coordinate and interact with geospatial groups, in particular with the UN-GGIM initiative;

(b) The resources created under HLG-MOS provide value to the whole international statistical community, and the statistical organizations benefit from being part of collaborative modernisation activities.

#### 1. Action taken by the Conference

20. The Conference approved the annual report of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics, including the outcomes of the activities carried out in 2015 and plans for the rest of 2016.

21. The Conference strongly supported the continuation of the work on modernization of official statistics. National and international statistical organizations were invited to support the HLG-MOS work programme and to become partners in the Statistical Modernization Community.

22. The Conference appreciated the Guidelines for Managers in Statistical Organisations, prepared under HLG-MOS, as well as the concrete and practical outcomes of the projects on the implementation of the Common Statistical Production Architecture and the use of Big Data for official statistics.

## V. Statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/17-19

23. The discussion was led by the co-chairs of the CES Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs, Mr. B. Rothen, Switzerland, and Ms. J. Park, United States of America. The aim of the discussion was to collect input to the development of the CES Road Map on statistics for SDGs.

24. The Task Force on adjusting the *CES Recommendations on measuring sustainable development* to SDGs presented the results of the first phase of the work.

25. Denmark, Mexico and the United States presented their work to assess the national capacities to produce statistics for SDGs.

26. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The work of the Task Force on adjusting the CES Recommendations to SDGs is very useful in helping countries to understand how to measure SDGs in practice, and also in updating the already existing sustainable development indicator sets to take into account SDGs.

(b) Linking SDG indicators to existing areas of statistics through the CES framework allows to see the interlinkages between goals and targets, organize the indicators into a logical framework, and identify statistics underlying the indicators. To help in practical work on measuring SDGs, the Task Force should map the global list of SDG indicators to the CES framework;

(c) The importance of work at the regional level as a bridge between the national and global levels was highlighted. Establishing a regional indicator list and priorities for developing indicators that are not yet available would be useful. At the same time, the regional indicators should not considerably increase the reporting burden;

(d) The Conference welcomed the draft Road Map on statistics for SDGs prepared by the Steering Group and agreed that it provides good guidance on the way forward. The Road Map should lead to practical actions;

(e) The national follow-up and review of the implementation of SDGs is driven by governments and ministries. Statistical offices should follow carefully the discussions at policy level to be ready with the measurement as soon as possible. At the same time, statisticians should use SDGs as an opportunity for close communication with policy makers and advocacy of official statistics;

(f) The Conference appreciated the information on the assessments of readiness to provide data on SDG indicators by Denmark, Mexico and United States, and emphasised the importance of exchanging practical experiences in the work on statistics for SDGs;

(g) Some countries are setting up national platforms for SDG reporting. The importance of compliance of these platforms with existing international standards (such as SDMX) to facilitate reporting was highlighted;

(h) The setup of the reporting on SDG indicators should aim at a situation where every country reports a particular indicator to the international community only once. UNECE, Eurostat and OECD should closely collaborate in this, based on the already existing reporting mechanisms.

(i) Clarification of data flows related to reporting on SDGs at national and international level is needed. Coordination and data flows can work in different ways in different countries, taking into account the national priorities and coordination at policy level. The policy side and statistical side of SDGs have to work together;

(j) The need for adequate resources for SDG reporting was highlighted, covering not only financial but also human and technical resources, knowledge and experience. The statistical offices must continue the regular production of official statistics to meet the existing commitments while taking on board the additional requirements from SDGs. Advocacy and raising awareness among governments of the required resources could use the lessons learned from population censuses;

(k) The subsection of the Road Map on disaggregation of data is important to ensure that 'no one is left behind'. The section should highlight the challenges in disaggregating data, for example according to migratory and disability status;

(l) Administrative registers are one important source of information for SDG indicators. Their use requires an adequate legal basis and know-how.

## **1. Action taken by the Conference**

27. The Conference considered the mapping of SDGs and targets with the CES framework for measuring sustainable development a very useful exercise; in particular as it identifies the linkages between SDGs and the CES framework. The results can be used by countries as practical guidance in linking the existing statistics and indicators to SDGs. The Task Force was commended on the good work done.

28. The Conference decided that the mapping of SDG indicators with the CES framework will be an important practical step, and encouraged further work by the Task Force in the next phase.

29. The Conference agreed that the "Draft CES Road Map on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals" provides useful practical guidance for countries in their work related to statistics for SDGs.

30. The Conference approved the structure of the Road Map and further work in the following five areas: assessing readiness of countries to report on SDG indicators, selecting regional indicators, clarifying the setup of reporting on SDG indicators, identifying needs for capacity building for SDG indicators, and communicating and disseminating statistics for SDGs.

31. The Conference stressed the importance of ensuring a link between the statistical work on SDGs and the decisions at policy level. Statisticians should actively communicate with policy makers, be proactive and anticipate developments on the policy side.

32. The Conference encouraged national statistical offices to take a leading role in coordinating data flows for SDG reporting at national level.

33. The Conference called upon various international organizations to urgently clarify their roles in SDG reporting and the related data flows. The Conference expressed the need for close cooperation between the secretariats of UNECE, Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations in work related to statistics for SDGs to avoid duplication.

34. The Conference agreed on the need for sharing country experience on issues related to statistics for SDGs, including on reporting through national platforms or other means. A mechanism should be established for this purpose.

35. The Conference asked the Steering Group to update the Road Map taking into account the outcome of the discussion and consider concrete activities and priorities in implementing the Road Map. The work will take into account activities by other international groups working on related issues, including the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building (HLG-PCCB), to avoid duplication and identify where and how the Steering Group can contribute to other global and regional work streams.

36. CES members, international organizations and other interested parties were invited to contribute to the further development of the Road Map, including the sub-groups which will be created. Countries and organizations wishing to participate in the work on specific sections of the Road Map are asked to inform the UNECE secretariat by e-mail to [tiina.luige@unece.org](mailto:tiina.luige@unece.org).

37. The Conference asked the CES Bureau and the Steering Group to follow up on the decisions and issues raised during the discussion. A revised draft Road Map will be presented to the CES Bureau in October 2016 and the first edition will be presented to the CES 2017 plenary session. In the meantime, the CES Steering Group was asked to proceed with advancing the work in the five areas of the draft Road Map.

38. The Conference agreed to share the Road Map with relevant stakeholders to ensure transparency and benefit from feedback, and to present it to the UNECE session in April 2017.

## **VI. Geospatial information services based on official statistics**

### **A. Introduction**

39. The seminar was chaired by K. Pesendorfer, Austria. In the opening remarks, he highlighted the growing importance of geospatial information and the increasing expectations of users for integrated statistical and geospatial data.

## B. Global and international dimensions

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/7, 7/Add.1-2, 20, 22

40. The chair of the European Group of UN-GGIM presented the work done by the Group and highlighted its connections to statistics. A joint presentation by Sweden and Eurostat gave an overview of the activities to build an infrastructure for European geospatial statistics, and its links to initiatives to modernize official statistics.

41. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The new technological developments, as well as the current policy initiatives provide opportunities for greater integration of statistical and geospatial data. The 2020 round of population and housing censuses and monitoring progress towards SDGs provide good incentives to link statistics to geospatial data;

(b) The demand for georeferenced data is increasing. Better technologies for visualizing and communicating data raise expectations for easier, faster and more interactive ways of getting information. Monitoring SDGs, humanitarian work and the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction are some examples of areas that increasingly require data linked to location;

(c) It is challenging to cooperate across organisational boundaries to link statistical and geospatial information. The organizational culture and understanding of data quality are often different. For example, geospatial agencies may produce commercial products which makes it more difficult to provide integrated data to users free of charge;

(d) Statistical offices are encouraged to be more active in geospatial activities.

## C. National experience and practices

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/21, 23-34

42. Mr. N. Rainer, Statistics Austria, presented a summary of key issues raised in the papers for this seminar. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Access to both statistical and geospatial data needs to be improved. Integration of statistical and geospatial data increases the analytical value of both data sets. Data linking exercises showcase the richness of possible uses of statistical and geospatial information. New tools for sharing data and data linking are needed;

(b) To get a full value of integrated statistical and geospatial data, statistical data need to be more comprehensive, more detailed and timelier. For example, population census data would be required at a much higher frequency than every five or ten years;

(c) A more open approach to data reuse and exchange in the government and closer collaboration with private businesses providing location-based information services could be beneficial for society. This would unleash the rich possibilities for developing services linking statistical, geospatial and other data. Knowledge sharing and reuse of data would increase the efficiency and productivity of involved data producers;

(d) Statisticians and geospatial data producers need to build a solid statistical-geospatial-framework with agreed standards, methods, procedures and services that enable integration of these data. Joint work to harmonize definitions and methodologies increases the quality of data and enables better data integration;

(e) The international work is to be well coordinated and statisticians need to be involved to provide guidance and contribute to the development of a global statistical-geospatial-framework.

(f) Georeferencing statistical data can be resource intensive and using geospatial data requires a high computing capacity. Developing countries will need support for building their capacity to integrate statistics and geospatial data;

(g) Ensuring strict data confidentiality is a priority for statisticians. Therefore, confidentiality protection procedures need to be carefully designed before embarking on providing new information services based on linking statistical and geospatial data.

43. The seminar chair concluded that the linking of geospatial data and statistics has high potential for responding to users' increasing expectations. Statisticians have a lot to offer, but joint work with mapping agencies and private companies will be required to learn from each other and improve technologies, software and knowledge to link and harmonize different kinds of data. Cooperation should go beyond statistical and geographical communities, to involve, for example, meteorological services, technology and communication experts. Georeferencing needs to be integrated into regular statistical production.

#### **1. Action taken by the Conference**

44. The Conference recognized the growing importance of integrating statistical and geospatial information and encouraged statistical and geospatial organizations to deepen their collaboration to better meet policy needs and other user requirements. The importance of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) initiative, and its regional bodies, such as UN-GGIM Europe and the UN expert group on the integration of statistical and geospatial information, in this respect was stressed.

45. The Conference discussed the following possible actions for the way forward:

(a) Develop communication by using success stories and promote the use of geospatial data for population and housing censuses and statistics for SDGs to better serve policy makers and other users;

(b) Consider guidance on a sound, global framework and common language to be used by national statistical offices and geospatial agencies;

(c) Identify common criteria and develop recommendations for improving collaboration among statistical offices, geospatial agencies and other providers of geospatial data and services;

(d) Reinforce the link to statistical modernization activities and integrate geospatial issues into the work being progressed under the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics;

(e) Support professional fora for statistical and geospatial experts to share good practices and learn from one another;

(f) Consider the potential contribution of UNECE to the international geospatial initiatives globally and regionally in close cooperation with UN-GGIM and its regional representatives.

46. The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised during the seminar. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions. The Conference encouraged CES members to use the rich resource of papers and ideas produced by the seminar.

## **VII. Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference**

### **A. Measuring human capital**

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/2, 2/Add.1-2

47. The Conference reviewed the *Guide on Measuring Human Capital* prepared by a Task Force set up by CES in June 2013. The *Guide* contributes to the conceptual development of human capital measurement, focusing on experimental human capital satellite accounts. Prior to the CES plenary session, the Secretariat conducted an electronic consultation of the *Guide* with the CES members. The comments by countries and organizations showed broad support to the *Guide*.

48. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The importance of including health in the concept and valuation of human capital was highlighted. This topic could be considered in further work;

(b) The calculations of human capital are complex and depend on numerous assumptions; therefore the estimates cannot be expected to be available in near future.

#### **1. Action taken by the Conference**

49. The Conference supported the *Guide on Measuring Human Capital*, and commended all countries and organizations who contributed to the conceptually challenging work. The Conference agreed with the need for further work and asked the Task Force to:

(a) Review the comments made during the electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session and reflect them in a revised version of the Recommendations;

(b) Review the proposals made for further work;

(c) Present the revised *Guide* and the plan for further work to the 2016 October meeting of the CES Bureau.

50. In addition, the revised *Guide* will be sent for consultation at the global level in collaboration with UNSD.

### **B. Circular migration**

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/3, 3/Add.1-2

51. The Conference reviewed the report on *Defining and Measuring Circular Migration* which was developed by a Task Force set up in February 2013. The report proposes a common international statistical definition of circular migration. An electronic consultation of the report was carried out prior to the CES plenary session. The responding countries and organizations showed broad support to the report.

52. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The topic is important and complex as migration has an influence on and can benefit all the involved parties (receiving country, sending country, migrants);

(b) Further testing is needed to see how alternative definitions of circular migration work in practice, especially concerning the number of border crossings and length of stay used in the definition;

(c) The possibility of adding definitions for short-term and seasonal circular migration should be considered.

#### 1. Action taken by the Conference

53. The Conference expressed broad support for the work on the report on *Defining and Measuring Circular Migration* and thanked all countries and organizations who contributed to preparing the report. The Conference agreed with the need for further work and asked the Task Force to:

(a) Review the comments made during the electronic consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session and reflect them in a revised version of the report;

(b) Discuss the definition of circular migration at the forthcoming UNECE-Eurostat Work Session on Migration Statistics on 18-20 May 2016, including the need for developing practical guidance;

(c) Present the revised report to the 2016 October meeting of the CES Bureau.

### C. Ageing-related statistics

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/4, 4/Add.1-2

54. The Conference reviewed the *Recommendations on Ageing-Related Statistics* which were developed by a Task Force set up in February 2013. The Recommendations aim to improve the availability, accessibility and comparability of statistical data in support of ageing-related policymaking. Prior to the CES plenary session, the Secretariat conducted an electronic consultation of the Recommendations with the CES members. The comments by countries and organizations showed broad support to the Recommendations.

#### 1. Action taken by the Conference

55. The Conference supported the *Recommendations on Ageing-Related Statistics*, and thanked all countries and organizations that contributed to this work. The Conference asked the Task Force to:

(a) Review the comments made during the electronic consultation and reflect them in a revised version of the *Recommendations*;

(b) Consider the proposals made for further work;

(c) Present the revised *Recommendations* and the plan for further work to the 2016 October meeting of the CES Bureau.

56. Some of the comments require more extensive consideration and the Bureau will decide on the need for a second round of electronic consultation of the revised *Recommendations* among all CES members.

### D. Value of official statistics, interim report

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/11, 11Add.1

57. The Conference discussed the *Interim Recommendations on the Value of Official Statistics*, prepared by a dedicated Task Force that was set up in May 2015. Prior to the

CES plenary session, the Secretariat collected feedback on the Recommendations and further work from the CES members. The replies by countries and organizations showed strong support to the work and provided many substantive comments. The Task Force will continue its work until spring 2017 to develop the measurement framework and indicators on the value of official statistics, and create a wiki platform for sharing best practices.

58. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Increasing the value of official statistics and communicating the value better is a timely topic for all statistical offices, especially with the growing expectations related to using new data sources and reporting on SDGs;

(b) Sharing examples of successful and innovative partnerships which help increase the value of official statistics would be useful for all statistical offices;

(c) Further work should build on the concept of public value, i.e. value of official statistics to society. One way to approach this could be analyzing cases where official statistics were not available or provided wrong information;

(d) Official statistics are fundamental to many businesses and to anyone attempting to use new data sources, such as Big Data. The accuracy of experimental estimates can only be assessed against official statistics as a benchmark;

(e) Better understanding of user needs is crucial and requires a cultural change in many statistical offices. To improve the value of statistics, we need a better understanding of who are the users of official statistics and how to respond to their expectations for easy and quick access to information.

#### 1. Action taken by the Conference

59. The Conference expressed support for the *Interim Recommendations on the Value of Official Statistics* and asked the Task Force to finalize the *Recommendations* for publication, including a measurement framework with indicators, for endorsement at the 2017 CES plenary session.

60. The Conference asked the Task Force to take into account the comments received during the electronic consultation and at the 2016 CES plenary session, and report to the CES Bureau on the proposals for further work.

61. The Conference encouraged all countries and organizations to contribute to the work by providing examples of good practices in communicating and measuring the value of official statistics.

### VIII. Technical cooperation: Generic Statistical Law developed as part of a United Nations Development Account (UNDA) 9th tranche project

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/8 and 8Add.1

62. The CES plenary session discussed the *Generic Law on Official Statistics* developed by UNECE, jointly with EFTA and Eurostat and with UNSD support as part of a United Nations Development Account project for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. The CES plenary session also discussed the need for further work to identify common elements of statistical legislation that could be useful for all CES countries.

63. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The *Generic Law on Official Statistics* and its Explanatory Notes provide a strong reference for developing statistical legislation in the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) to ensure professional independence and harmonize the institutional frameworks of statistical production within the sub-region and with international practices. The documents have been tailored for the countries of the sub-region of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia where Global Assessments of the National Statistical Systems were carried out jointly by UNECE, EFTA and Eurostat at countries' request;

(b) The Generic Law summarizes the strategic aspects of building a strong framework for official statistics, based on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It is a useful checklist with a high practical value for enhancing national statistical systems. Several countries are already using it;

(c) The Conference noted the importance of the Generic Statistical Law also in the context of building statistical capacity in developing countries;

(d) Improving the governance of statistical production and the legal framework is a priority for a large number of countries and fundamental to producing high-quality statistics. Countries beyond the EECCA region will benefit from the guidance provided in the Generic Law and its Explanatory Notes;

(e) Further work should be extended to all CES countries, and beyond, to identify common elements of statistical legislation and develop good practice guidance to help countries benchmark their national statistical legislation.

## 1. Action taken by the Conference

64. The Conference expressed strong support and endorsed the *Generic Law on Official Statistics* and its explanatory notes as a recommendation for the countries of the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asian sub-region that took part in the United Nations Development Account project. The Conference emphasized that the *Generic Law* will also be useful for other CES countries and globally as a reference for developing statistical legislation.

65. The Conference noted that the *Generic Law* is not a legal instrument but rather an example of best practices and guidance on issues to be taken into account in national statistical legislation. The text will need to be adapted to the national legislative framework of each country.

66. The Conference asked the work to continue with developing guidance on common elements of statistical legislation that countries could use as a basis of benchmarking or revising statistical legislation. The Conference approved the establishment of a Task Force on common elements of statistical legislation and proposed several topics that could be dealt with, such as the professional independence and coordination of the national statistical system, accountability of statistical authorities, data protection, access to data from administrative and private sources, cooperation with geospatial agencies, ensuring sufficient resources for statistics production, relation between chargeable services and open data, and the interaction of statistical and other legislation.

67. The following countries and organizations expressed interest in participating in the work: Canada, France, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat, International Monetary Fund and UNSD.

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

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/6 and 6Add.1-2

68. The CES plenary session was informed about the outcome of the recent in-depth review on diversification of population census methodology and sources conducted by the CES Bureau in October 2015. An electronic consultation on the result of the review was carried out prior to the CES plenary session. All responding countries and international organizations supported the outcome of the review.

69. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a) France noted that paragraph 33 of the in-depth review paper on diversification of population census methodology and sources needs reformulation to provide a more balanced evaluation of the rolling census;

(b) Further information was provided about the 2015 census in Japan, with respect to internet response, coding, use of registers and access to micro-data.

70. The outcomes of two other in-depth reviews, namely 'Strategic partnerships' and 'Geo-spatial information services based on official statistics' served as input to the CES seminars, and were considered under agenda items 3 and 6.

### **1. Action taken by the Conference**

71. The Conference endorsed the outcome of the in-depth review of diversification of population census methodology and sources, including extending the mandate of the Steering Group on Population and Housing Censuses until 2019 and establishing a Task Force on Register-Based and Combined Censuses. The comments by France and Japan during the CES plenary session will be taken into account in the final in-depth review paper on diversification of population census methodology and sources. The in-depth review will also be useful for the Handbook on Population and Housing Censuses that UNSD is currently updating.

72. The Conference commended the countries who prepared the in-depth review papers, which were of high quality, and thanked countries and organizations that contributed to the reviews and provided comments during the consultation. The comments received will be taken into account in possible further work.

## **X. Programme of work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Statistics subprogramme**

### **A. Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists**

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/15 and addenda

73. The Conference welcomed the work undertaken by the UNECE Statistical Division in implementing the Statistical Programme for 2015.

### **1. Action taken by the Conference**

74. The Conference approved the reports of the meetings of the CES Bureau and the report on the implementation of the 2015 UNECE Statistical Programme (ECE/CES/2016/15).

## B. Programme planning documents for the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Statistics subprogramme

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/12, 13

75. The Conference reviewed the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2016 and the programme planning documents of the Statistics subprogramme prepared in the context of the United Nations secretariat's biennial planning and reporting cycle. The documents were agreed by the CES Bureau at its meetings in October 2015 and February 2016.

### 1. Action taken by the Conference

76. The Conference adopted the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2016 (ECE/CES/2016/12) including the list of planned meetings, and the Strategic Framework for 2018-2019 (ECE/CES/2016/13).

77. The Conference emphasized the importance of translating into the three official languages of UNECE (English, French and Russian) the main documents for the CES plenary session and its meetings in 2016-2017 in the following areas:

- (a) Environment and multi-domain statistics;
- (b) Demographic and social statistics (gender statistics, population and housing censuses);
- (c) Economic statistics (national accounts, global production, business registers, consumer prices and quality of employment);
- (d) Statistical modernization (human resources management and training);
- (e) Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals.

78. The main documents include the provisional agenda, the report and one main document for each sub-item on the agenda. For the CES plenary session, the main documents include in addition six documents for each sub-session.

79. The Conference underlined the importance of publishing the expected outcomes of the CES work in English and Russian, subject to finalizing them according to the decisions of the CES plenary session. This includes the following:

- (a) Guide on Measuring Human Capital<sup>1</sup>
- (b) Report on Defining and Measuring Circular Migration<sup>2</sup>
- (c) Use of administrative sources and sample surveys to measure international migration in the CIS region<sup>3</sup>
- (d) Recommendations on ageing-related statistics<sup>4</sup>
- (e) The Generic Statistical Law and its Explanatory Notes<sup>5</sup>
- (f) Measuring population and housing in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia: review of practices in the 2010 round of censuses<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Approx. 120 pages, 400 copies printed in English and 100 copies in Russian

<sup>2</sup> Approx. 40 pages, electronic only, English only

<sup>3</sup> Approx. 200 pages, 200 copies printed in English and 200 copies in Russian

<sup>4</sup> Approx. 100 pages, 200 copies printed in English

<sup>5</sup> Approx. 50 pages, 200 copies printed in English, 300 copies in Russian and 50 copies in French

<sup>6</sup> Approx. 200 pages, 500 copies printed in English and Russian

(g) Key recommendations and good practices in the communication of population projections<sup>7</sup>

## **XI. Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the 2017 Conference of European Statisticians plenary session**

*Documentation:* ECE/CES/2016/14

80. Taking into account the results of the survey carried out among the CES members in March-April 2016 and the recommendation by the CES Bureau, the following topics were selected for discussion at the CES plenary session in 2017:

### **A. Measuring poverty**

*Organizers:* Israel, Mexico and UNECE

*Papers offered by:* Israel, Poland, Russian Federation, Norway, Slovakia, Switzerland (possibly) and Eurostat.

### **B. The next generation of statisticians and data scientists**

*Organizers:* Finland and Eurostat

*Papers offered by:* Australia, Germany, Israel, Norway, Sweden (possibly) and United States.

81. The CES Bureau will decide on the format and duration of the seminars.

## **XII. Other business**

82. The 2017 CES plenary session will take place on 19-21 (a.m.) June 2017 in Geneva, back-to-back with the meeting of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (21 p.m. – 22 June 2017).

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<sup>7</sup> Approx. 80 pages, electronic only, English only