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Council**

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STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Forty-fifth plenary session
(Geneva, 10-12 June 1997)

Annotated provisional agenda

The plenary session will start at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, 10 June. However, there will also be a briefing session at 10.30 to 12:30 on Tuesday 10 June in the same Salle as the plenary session. It is intended primarily for those who are not familiar with the Conference. See annex II.

Introductory comments

1. The Conference's attention is drawn to the following key items on this year's agenda:

- **Item 3 - Integrated presentation and coordination of international statistical work in the ECE region:** In an attempt to have a more focused and more interesting discussion under this item, the Bureau has selected, based on the views expressed by countries in response to the Chairman's December 1996 circular letter to NSOs in the region, six programme elements are to be discussed in greater depth under this item (they are listed in the explanatory notes to the agenda below). Given the role of the plenary session it is anticipated that discussion will not be concerned with the substance of these issues but rather with how they are being dealt with at the international level in the region (see also the explanatory notes below). The Bureau has appointed Discussants for each of the selected topics, and an average of about 45 minutes will be available for discussion of each of them. Only 30 minutes has been

reserved in the tentative timetable for members of the Conference to raise issues on the 40-odd other programme elements that are contained in the integrated presentation.

- **Item 7 - "Impact of information technology developments on statistical operations: Managerial considerations"** is the topic of substantive discussion at this year's plenary session. Mr. Wouter Keller and Mr. Willem de Vries of Statistics Netherlands have organized this session and Mr. Keller will chair the session. Papers have been contributed by eight countries. As usual discussion under this item is intended primarily for heads of national statistical offices rather than for subject matter specialists.

2. The Conference is expected to complete most of its work by 4:00 on Thursday, 12 June. The final 45 minutes of the plenary session will be devoted to (i) the election of a new Bureau of the Conference for the 1997/98 - 1998/99 period and (ii) the adoption of the report of the 1997 plenary session.

3. The documents intended for discussion are listed in the agenda under the relevant agenda items. Background documents, which are NOT intended for discussion at the plenary session, are listed in Annex I. All documents for the meeting will be distributed in the usual way, but will also be available on the ECE World Wide Web page in English, French and Russian as the translations become available. The address is as follows:
<http://www.unece.org/stats/>

Provisional agenda

(The suggested timetable is shown in the table below)

1. Adoption of the agenda
2. Outcomes of meetings of the Parent Bodies of the CES
 - a) The April 1997 session of the ECE
 - b) The Feb. 1997 session of the UN Statistical Commission
3. **Integrated presentation and coordination of international statistical work in the ECE region**
4. Collection of data jointly by ECE, Eurostat and OECD
5. Best practices for official statistics
6. Outcome of the 1996 Lisbon seminar
7. **Topic for substantive discussion at the 1997 plenary session**
8. Election of a new Bureau for 1997/98 and 1998/99
9. Other business
10. Adoption of the report, and closing of the plenary session

Provisional agenda, presented according to the tentative timetable suggested by the Bureau

Tuesday, 10 June (2:30 - 5:30 p.m.)		
Time	Item	Topic
(10:30-12:30)	-	(Informal briefing session for new delegates and other interested persons)
2:30-2:40	-	Opening of the plenary session (opening address)
2:40-2:45	8 (Introduction)	Introduction to the process of Bureau elections
2:45	2	Meetings of the Parent Bodies of the CES
2:45-2:55	2a	Implications of the April 1997 session of the Economic Commission for Europe
2:55-3:05	2b	Main outcomes of the February 1997 session of the UN Statistical Commission
3:05	3	Integrated presentation and coordination of international statistical work in the ECE region
3:05-3:15	3	(Chairman's introductory comments)
3:15-4:00	"	Household incomes and expenditures (part of Programme Element (PE) 4.13)
4:25-5:10	"	European Comparisons Programme (part of PE 3.9)
5:10-5:30	"	Price statistics (part of PE 3.9)
Wednesday, 11 June		
9:30-9:55	3 (cont.)	Price statistics (part of PE 3.9) (cont.)
9:55-10:40	"	Minimum standards for metadata on Internet (part of PE 2.3)
10:40-11:25	"	Environmental accounting (part of PE 5.2)
11:50-12:30	"	International trade in financial services (part of PE 3.2)
2:30-3:00	"	Remaining 40 Programme Elements
3:00-3:20	4	ECE-Eurostat-OECD joint data collections
3:20-3:30	5	Best practices for official statistics
3:30-3:40	6	Outcome of the Lisbon Seminar
3:40-3:50	7	Topic for substantive discussion (Introduction)
4:15-5:30	7 (cont.)	Session 1 (First pair of country papers)

Time	Item	Topic
Thursday 12 June		
9:30-10:45, 11:10-12:30	7 (cont.) "	Session 2 (Second pair of country papers) Session 3 (Third pair of country papers)
2:30-3:45, 3:45-3:50	" "	Session 4 (Last pair of country papers) Concluding comments
3:50-4:00	8 (cont.)	Elections of Officers (cont)
4:00	9	Other business
4:30-5:00	10	Adoption of the report

Explanatory notes to the agenda

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda, and consideration of the procedures to be followed at the plenary session

The Bureau of the Conference agreed the outline of this provisional agenda at its February 1997 meeting. It is presented in more detail in this document for the approval of the Conference.

At several recent plenary sessions, members of the Conference have asked the Bureau to consider whether and how the duration of the plenary sessions could be reduced and how its business might be conducted more efficiently and effectively. In response to those requests, this year's plenary session has been reduced once again to a duration of two-and-one-half days. To help ensure this goal can be achieved in an efficient manner, the procedures which the Conference approved at its 1994 session for improving the efficiency of the CES plenary sessions and applied at all subsequent sessions (CES/821) will be applied again during the 1997 session.

Item 2: Implications of meetings of the Conference's parent bodies

a) The April 1997 session of the Economic Commission for Europe

Information on the discussions held at the April 1997 session of the Economic Commission for Europe and on resolutions and decisions taken at it which have a bearing on the work of the Conference will be presented in CES/1997/11. Documents considered at the Commission session which are likely to be of interest to the Conference will also be made available at the plenary session. One such document is the Commission's "Plan of Action" (E/ECE/1347), which summarizes the outcome of the recently completed reform of the ECE which was undertaken by the Permanent Missions of ECE member States in collaboration with national capitals.

b) The February 1997 meeting of the UN Statistical Commission

Information on the conclusions reached and the decisions taken at the February 1997 session of the Statistical Division that may have a bearing on the work of the Conference and on international statistical work affecting ECE, EU and OECD countries is presented at the programme element level in the integrated presentation of international statistical work in the ECE region, under the headings "Attention of the Conference is drawn to ..." (see item 3 of the provisional agenda, and documents CES/1997/10 and addenda 1-6). However, Mr. Habermann, Director of the UN Statistics Division, will provide some additional information orally under this item.

Item 3: Integrated presentation and coordination of international statistical work affecting ECE, EU and OECD countries

The Conference concluded at its 1996 plenary session that although it was generally satisfied with the structure and content of the integrated presentation, it considered that the process involved in reviewing and taking

decisions on it should be improved. Therefore, it asked the Bureau to find a mechanism which would permit the Conference to approve its planned future work programme in a less time-consuming manner, and without sacrificing the possibility of countries to comment on it should they wish to do so. In response to that request, the Bureau agreed that most of the time to be devoted to the review of the integrated presentation at the 1997 plenary session should be devoted to discussion on a small number of programme elements (about six) which countries consider merit being discussed in greater detail. The Bureau selected these programme elements on the basis of suggestions put forward by most countries in response to the Chairman's circular letter of December 1996, as follows: Household incomes and expenditure (part of Programme element (PE) 4.13); Internet metadata (part of PE 2.3); International trade in financial services ((part of PE 3.2); Price statistics (part of PE 3.9); European Comparisons Programme (part of PE 3.9); and Environmental accounting (part of PE 5.2).

The Bureau appointed a discussant for each of these six PEs. It also agreed that an average of about 45 minutes should be reserved for the discussant's presentation and the Conference's discussion of each of these six programme elements. It also agreed that during the time reserved for discussion of the six programme elements, both the discussant and the members of the Conference should consider questions such as the following: Are the objectives and the expected outputs shown in the integrated presentation for this work area the ones that member States want? Do the plans of the various organizations collectively match the objectives and expectations? Are there gaps or overlaps? Is each organization playing the role expected of it? What should the Conference do to ensure that the activities organizations engage in fulfil member countries' needs?

The Bureau also agreed that about half an hour in aggregate should be reserved at the end of the agenda item to permit members of the Conference to comment on any of the remaining 40 or so PEs in the integrated presentation.

As this is the first time that the programme of work is being dealt with in this selective manner, it is somewhat experimental and can of course change again in the future if the Conference wishes.

The complete integrated presentation is too large to produce in a single document. It is therefore presented in several addenda (one for each of the six programme activities). Each of these documents contains brief descriptions of the conclusions reached by the Bureau in its review of the work that was carried out in the Conference's work programme since the 1996 plenary session and in its review of work planned to be carried out in the next two years. The Bureau's proposals for decisions by the Conference are included in each of these documents project by project.

Document CES/1997/10 also contains an annex in which information is given on the resources which are expected to be available in the ECE in the 1998-1999 biennium for servicing the programme of work of the Conference.

Document CES/1997/10/Add.7 is also an important document. It contains up-to-date information on the outcome of work conducted in projects in the

Conference's work programme during the March-June 1996 period. Since addenda 1-6 were finalized in March, they also include recommendations made by the Bureau at its February 1996 meeting on future work for decision by the Conference.

The coordination of international statistical work affecting ECE, EU and OECD countries and the taking of decisions on the Conference's own work programme are two of the most important functions that the Conference is expected to perform at each plenary session. These responsibilities will be carried out under this agenda item. Therefore, under this item the Conference is expected to **take decisions on its own work programme** and, when considered appropriate, to **offer guidance and advice to other international and supranational organizations and to other ECE Principal Subsidiary Bodies** on planned activities in their work programmes that relate to these countries.

Discussion is expected to focus primarily on the material presented in documents CES/1997/10 and its addenda. However, if need be, the various background documents listed in the Annex of the provisional agenda are also available for reference.

Item 4: Collection of data jointly by ECE, Eurostat and OECD

The Conference agreed at its 1996 plenary session that it would be useful to have ECE, Eurostat and OECD prepare a joint note for a forthcoming plenary session summarizing how they are proceeding to streamline data collection from member countries. A paper prepared jointly by the three organizations (CES/1997/1) will serve as the basis for discussion. As the three organizations also coordinate their data collection with other organizations (such as the UN Statistics Division in New York), they will also be asked to contribute to next year's joint paper.

Item 5: Best practices for official statistics

Mr. Outrata (Czech Republic) will inform the Conference under this item about the meeting that is planned to be held in Prague in 1998 on the topic of best practices for official statistics.

The Bureau asked Eurostat, the IMF and the OECD to prepare a note for its October 1996 meeting, outlining how they have used the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics in their work. The Paper was prepared, and the Bureau decided that the paper should be presented to the 1997 plenary session for information. The paper has been issued as CES/1997/R.6.

Item 6: Outcome of the 1996 Lisbon seminar

The Chairman will inform the Conference orally under this item of the outcome of the seminar for heads of statistical services that was held in Lisbon in September devoted to the theme "Official statistics: past and

future". The report of the seminar will be available at the plenary session as a background document (CES/SEM.35/2).

Item 7: Impact of information technology developments on statistical operations: Managerial considerations

Each year the plenary session has the opportunity to discuss, in the form of a short seminar, a topic of interest to heads of national statistical offices. On this occasion the members of the Conference are invited to comment in substantive discussion on the topic "Impact of information technology developments on statistical operations: Managerial considerations". Discussion will be based on papers to be contributed by Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the USA (documents CES/1997/2-9). The session has been organized by Willem De Vries and Woulter Keller of the Netherlands, and current plans (as of the end of March 1997) call for the session to be sub-divided into the following four parts: (i) a general session devoted to strategic aspects; (ii) management of IT changes; (iii) impact of EDI on data collection; and (iv) the electronic highway, internet, and data dissemination. These plans are subject to change, depending on the content of the papers that countries contribute as the basis for discussion. Mr. Keller will chair this part of the plenary session. He has also asked some countries to serve as Discussants of the papers that have been contributed as the basis for discussion of this topic.

A report of the discussion will not be adopted at the end of the session (see agenda item 10) but a summary will be distributed to participants within about three weeks of the closing of the plenary session.

Item 8: Election of a new Bureau for 1997/98 and 1998/99

The term of office of the current Bureau of the Conference expires at the closing of the 1997 plenary session. The following persons are currently members of the Bureau: Ivan Fellegi (Chair) of Canada, Paolo Garonna of Italy, Svein Longva of Norway, Donal Murphy of Ireland, Edvard Outrata of the Czech Republic, and Yuri Yurkov of the Russian Federation. A new Bureau will be elected for the 1997/98 and 1998/99 two-year period. The procedures to be followed in electing the new Bureau were approved by the Conference at its 1991 plenary session (see CES/1997/13). All six members of the current Bureau are eligible to be re-elected to the Bureau, but a new Chair will have to be elected because at the time of the closing of the 1997 plenary session Ivan Fellegi will have been Chairman for the maximum number of four years.

In accordance with the procedures adopted by the Conference at its 1991 plenary session, the process of electing the new Bureau will be carried out by Carlo Malaguerra, President of the Federal Statistical Office of Switzerland, who is the most senior former Chairman of the Conference.

Item 9: Other business

This item on the agenda is for any topic which the Conference may decide to add during the adoption of the agenda.

Item 10: Adoption of the report, and closing of the plenary session

The Conference is expected to adopt the report of the present plenary session before it adjourns. To enable this to be accomplished as quickly as possible and during the limited time available, the Bureau has asked the secretariat to follow the same procedure that was used at the 1995 and 1996 plenary sessions, where it prepared a considerably shorter draft report than was prepared in preceding years. The report will therefore be limited as far as possible to decisions taken by the Conference during the course of the plenary session. Since the discussion that takes place on the topic for substantive discussion (agenda item 7) will not be decision oriented, the draft report will not include a report of that discussion. However, a summary of it will be prepared after the plenary session and mailed to all members of the Conference a few weeks after the plenary session.

Delegates are asked to confine their suggestions for amendments to the report to those of a substantive nature (i.e. to correcting important errors or omissions). They are also asked to hand in their suggestions for amendments in writing and if possible in English before the discussion of the adoption of the report. The secretariat will distribute each part of the draft report as soon as it becomes available, in each of ECE's three official working languages.

Annex I: List of background documents for the 1997 plenary session

The following supplementary documents contain background information for several items of the provisional agenda. They are listed below by agenda item number. The background documents marked with an asterisk are those which the Conference may consider to be more important. However, the Bureau considers that none of the documents listed below need be discussed at the plenary session.

		<u>Document</u>
Agenda item 1	Procedures to be followed for ensuring efficient plenary sessions	CES/821
Agenda item 2	Plan of Action adopted by the ECE at its April 1997 session	E/ECE/1347
Agenda item 3		
	<u>Programme activity 1: Organization and operation of statistical services</u>	
PE 1.1:	Report of the Oct. 1996 meeting of the CES Bureau	CES/BUR.97/13
PE 1.1:	Report of the Feb. 1997 meeting of the CES Bureau	CES/BUR.97/26
PE 1.2:	Application of the Fundamental Principles	CES/1997/R.6
PE 1.2:	Report of the September 1996 Lisbon seminar	CES/SEM.35/2
	<u>Programme activity 2: Technical infrastructure and other cross-cutting issues</u>	
PE 2.1:	Report of the Working Party on EDP	CES/WP.9/342
PE 2.2:	Report of the work session on metadata	CES/1997/R.3
PE 2.2:	Report of the work session on statistical data editing	CES/1997/R.4
PE 2.3:	Report of the work session on statistical output for dissemination to information media	CES/1997/12
	<u>Programme activity 3: Economic statistics</u>	
PE 3.1:	Report of the ECE-OECD meeting on national accounts	CES/AC.68/62
PE 3.4:	Report of the Working Party on Transport Statistics	CES/AC.62/83
PE 3.11:	Report of the seminar on statistical nomenclatures	CES/SEM.36/3
	<u>Programme activity 4: Social and demographic statistics</u>	
PE 4.4:	Report of the work session on registers and administrative records	CES/1997/R.5
PE 4.5:	ECE-Eurostat draft recommendations for the 2000 round of population and housing censuses	CES/AC.6/158*
PE 4.5:	Report of the ECE-Eurostat meeting on population and housing censuses	CES/AC.6/161*
PE 4.11:	Report of ECE-Eurostat work session on migration statistics	CES/1997/R.1
	<u>Programme activity 5: Environment statistics</u>	
PE 5.1:	Report of the work session on methodology	CES/1997/R.2
Agenda item 8		
	Rules governing the election of CES Bureau members	CES/1997/13*

* Documents marked with an asterisk are ones that the Conference may consider more important than the others.

Annex II: Briefing Session

10:30 to 12:30, Tuesday 10 June 1997
(To be held in the same Salle as the plenary session)

1. At the request of the Bureau of the Conference, the Secretariat will organise a briefing session mainly for delegates who may not be familiar with the Conference or its plenary session. Other delegates or members of delegations, who might wish to learn more about the Conference and its relations with other international institutions, are also welcome.
2. A similar briefing, held before the 1993 plenary session, was found to be useful by the delegates who attended.
3. On this occasion, in addition to representatives of the ECE secretariat, the briefing will also be presented by senior representatives of OECD, Eurostat and the United Nations Statistics Division (New York). It will be chaired by Carlo Malaguerra, head of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office who is also an ex-chairman of the Conference (1990 to 1993) and who will be this year's "kingmaker" (i.e. organiser of the elections to the Bureau).
4. A short paper describing the Conference and its plenary session (CES/1997/INF.1) is being sent to delegations in advance of the briefing. It will be in English, French and Russian and will also be available (in common with the other documents for the plenary session) on the ECE World Wide Web page in all three languages as soon as it is translated: <http://www.unece.org/stats/>
5. Other briefing material will also be provided at the briefing session.
6. The Chairman and the presenters, from ECE, OECD, Eurostat and UNSD, will be pleased to answer questions after their brief presentations.