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PROGRESS REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

Report on the implementation of the UNECE Statistical Programme

Note by the secretariat¹

I. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2005-2006

A. Coordination of international statistical work in the UNECE region (Activity 1: 1.1-1.5)

1. In 2005, at its regular annual session, the Conference of European Statisticians considered the improved data reporting in a seminar organized by the United States. The measurement of sustainable development was discussed in a second seminar organized by Statistics Sweden. As a follow-up to the seminar, a joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group for Statistics on Sustainable Development was set up.

2. The Conference also made an in-depth review of migration statistics, reviewed the progress with developing the Guidelines on Confidentiality and Access to Microdata and adopted a revised classification of transport statistics. The results of an experiment on Measuring the Activities of Multinational Enterprises were presented.

3. As one of the custodian organizations of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics

¹ The 2005 and 2006 Statistical Programmes are available on the UNECE website at: <http://www.unece.org/stats/activities.e.htm>. Links to more detailed information on activities in specific areas are provided in document ECE/CES/2006/4.

(adopted by UNECE in 1992), the UNECE made a major contribution to the drafting of a declaration of similar principles for the statistical activities of international organizations. Furthermore, the UNECE secretariat provided assistance and advice for the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to the statistical offices of some South-east European and CSI countries.

B. Collection, processing and dissemination of macroeconomic, social and demographic statistics (Activity 2: 2.1-2.6)

4. The UNECE public statistical database was consolidated under a common interface (based on PC-AXIS). After the initial release of the macroeconomic database, the structure and presentation were improved. Gender and social statistics data were integrated within the same interface.

5. As a consequence of the UNECE Reform Plan, a number of economic data series were discontinued and it was decided to upload only a reduced number of selected economic time series to the public database. These series include national accounts aggregates and other key macroeconomic indicators. The majority of the series, including metadata, were made available as from April 2005, while the remaining economic series are expected to be uploaded in the course of 2006. For the Social and demographic area of the database (the "Gender statistics database"), a number of series were made available already in spring 2006, and more series are planned to be uploaded in the course of 2006. The main purpose of this database, compared to databases of other organizations, is to provide timely and comparable statistics for the UNECE member states, with a particular view on the CIS and South-East European countries.

C. Methodological work in various statistical areas (Activity 3: 3.1-3.21)

6. The methodological work towards new or revised statistical standards and guidelines continued. Most expert meetings held in the various subject areas were organized as joint meetings with other organizations. In addition to providing substantive inputs to and secretarial support for these meetings, the role of the UNECE secretariat is to allow for the non-EU and non-OECD countries of the UNECE region to be associated with the development work of the partner organizations. Another role that the UNECE also plays is to provide a bridge for the European-based specialized UN agencies with the national statistical offices in the region.

Economic statistics

7. The UNECE secretariat has been involved in the process of the current update of 1993 SNA through its participation in the work of the ISWGNA and the Advisory Expert Group on the SNA update, and through contributing to the consultation with the countries in the UNECE region. A Joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD meeting was held on 25-28 April 2006 to discuss the update of the 1993 SNA and other conceptual and practical issues related to national accounts. For the first time, all the decisions and recommendations on the forty-four issues under revision were presented to countries in a consolidated way for discussion regarding their consistency. Furthermore, one full day was dedicated to a seminar on Globalisation and its Effect on National Accounts. A special session in Russian only was devoted to data availability and data collection from the CIS countries. The meeting recommended that the UNECE should extend the survey on

the use of employment data in national accounts to those UNECE countries that are not covered by the Eurostat/OECD questionnaire (CIS and Western Balkan countries). The possibility of compiling a document on best practices in using employment data in national accounts should be explored.

8. The survey on National Practices in Measuring the Non-observed Economy was carried out. Over 40 countries replied to the survey and the UNECE secretariat is now analyzing and summarizing the country contributions. The results are expected to be published at the end of 2006 or beginning of 2007.

9. The report "Industrial production indices: experience and problems in Russia" was prepared, as a result of a joint project by the UNECE, the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CISSC) and the Federal State Statistics Service of Russia (Rosstat). The purpose of the project was to assist CIS countries in improving their methodology of compiling industrial production indices by sharing the practice and experience of Rosstat in this area.

10. The UNECE survey on business registers data among the non-EU member countries in the UNECE region and non-European OECD countries was carried out. This survey complements the corresponding survey that Eurostat conducts for the EU countries. Based on the results of the survey, an analytical report will be prepared for presentation to the joint UNECE/Eurostat Seminar on Business Registers in 2007. The UNECE Statistical Division has contacted UNSD to explore the possibilities for cooperation and coordination of work and activities in the field of business registers.

11. The work on the international Handbook on Rural Households, Livelihood and Well-being: Statistics on Rural Development and Agriculture Household Income was completed. The Handbook is now available from the UNECE website. The publication of the Handbook will be discussed during the IWG-AGRI Task Force meeting, which will take place in June 2006 in Paris.

12. A joint UNECE/ILO meeting on CPIs held on 10-12 May 2006 discussed conceptual and practical issues regarding the compilation of CPIs. A separate session of the meeting was devoted to particular problems in the calculation of CPIs in emerging economies. The new international CPI Manual, published in 2004, was also discussed. It was agreed that further and more practical guidelines are needed and that this may be in the form of supplementary Handbooks, for example on the treatment of seasonal items, health services or chain index formulas. A users' feedback survey on the CPI manual is planned to be conducted in 2006 or 2007 in cooperation with ILO.

13. The Steering Group on CPI met during the joint UNECE/ILO meeting on CPIs and revised its terms of reference. It also proposed possible issues to be included on the agenda for the next joint CPI meeting in 2008. Among these were data processing and editing, coherence between CPIs, PPIs and PPPs, the treatment of seasonal items and quality adjustments for services.

Social and demographic statistics

14. A major activity in demographic and social statistics was the development of the recommendations for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses. The UNECE secretariat coordinated and substantially contributed to the work of the Steering Group and Task Forces working toward the development of the new CES Recommendations for the 2010 Censuses of Population and Housing. The final draft will be presented for adoption at the CES plenary session in June 2006.

15. In the field of migration statistics, a meeting was organized in 2005 in collaboration with Eurostat, and a task force was established to analyze the feasibility of using receiving countries data to estimate emigration in sending countries. In collaboration with the task force members, the UNECE developed the framework for the data exchange and coordinated inputs from the participating countries. UNECE also contributed to the finalization of the new international migration framework developed for the Census Recommendations and was asked to present it on different occasions where interest was shown in adopting the same framework for other data collection operations inside and outside the region.

16. Gender statistics continued to be one of the areas of major involvement of UNECE. In addition to the maintenance of the gender statistics web-site and database and the substantial contributions presented in relevant events in the region, work continued to coordinate and contribute to the three task forces, namely training of statisticians in engendering national statistical systems, measurement of violence against women and time-use surveys. The UNECE secretariat also coordinated the development of the outline of the Training Manual on engendering national statistical systems and collected information on the methodology used in national surveys to measure violence against women with the objective of better harmonizing methods and definitions.

17. UNECE finalized at the end of 2005 the inventory of victimization surveys carried out in the region and coordinated the task force work in analyzing the results. A joint UNECE/UNODC meeting discussed the analysis of methodologies used in victimization surveys and finalized plans for the development of a Manual on victimization surveys.

18. In cooperation with Eurostat and OECD, UNECE organized the first meeting of ECE directors of social statistics in 2005. As a result of the meeting a new task force was established with the aim of developing common survey modules in emerging areas of social statistics.

19. UNECE continued to coordinate and contribute to the Steering Group and task force on the measurement of health status. At the end of 2005, the first draft produced by the task force was reviewed at the UNECE-WHO-Eurostat meeting.

20. On the monitoring of MDG in the region, UNECE developed a partnership with the regional offices of UNICEF and UNDP, establishing a joint task force on MDG statistics. This task force carried out an assessment of countries' capacity to produce and disseminate MDG-relevant statistics and an assessment of MDG data collected by the regional and international organizations active in the region. The task force also organized workshops for DevInfo and developed a regional MDG database. A joint proposal for future work supporting countries to collect, disseminate and use MDG statistics was developed. UNECE also finalized its own MDG report for the region.

Cross-cutting issues in statistics

21. The first phase of the Task Force on a common metadata framework, aimed at creating an annotated structure of the framework, was completed. Substantive progress has been made in the section on functions of metadata and the section on metadata objects and standards. The April 2006 work session on statistical metadata focused on finalizing of the framework and made recommendations for the first release of the Framework on the Internet and its further maintenance.

22. A publication "Making Data Meaningful: A guide to writing stories about numbers" was released in 2005. The guide is available in printed form and on the website. The web version is planned to be updated regularly as a living document.

23. Preparations for the 2006 June meeting on management of statistical information systems were completed. The meeting will focus on various aspects of information services including client relations, service agreements, partnership and outsourcing. International exchange of experience in this field is very important because of the rapid developments and the fact that there are few opportunities for IT experts in NSOs to meet their counterparts from other offices. The Task Force on Electronic Data Reporting for Primary Data Collection has been established.

24. The final version of the Guidelines on Confidentiality and Access to Microdata was prepared. It was approved by the Bureau in February 2006 as Interim Guidelines and submitted to the Conference for adoption.

25. Following the recommendations of the 2005 CES seminar on Measurement of Sustainable Development, the CES Bureau created a Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on Statistics for Sustainable Development (WGSSD) and a Steering Committee chaired by Statistics Canada. The UNECE secretariat, together with OECD, provides the secretariat for the work of these bodies. The first meeting of the WGSSD was held in April 2006 in Luxembourg. The Steering Committee met twice during the period March-May to further develop the work plan of the WGSSD and to explore the possible frameworks for statistics on sustainable development.

26. Four issues of the quarterly Statistical Journal were prepared, including special issues on population censuses and violence against women.

D. Technical assistance to UNECE member countries (Activity 4: 4.1-4.2)

27. In addition to assistance related to the implementation of the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the Statistical Division provided technical cooperation in various statistical areas to the SEE and CIS countries. The activities were concentrated on assisting economies in transition in the implementation of international statistical standards and statistical capacity building. In particular, advisory services to statistical capacity building were provided to: Albania in assessment of the national statistical system; to UNMIK on the planned population census; to Georgia on the revision of the law on official statistics and on population statistics; to The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on the revision of the law on official statistics; to the Russian Federation on international migration statistics; to Turkmenistan on gender aspects

of employment and income; to CIS countries on MDG-related health statistics, and on the compilation of industrial production indices in cooperation with the Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS and the Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation.

28. Advisory services were also provided during a training session on international migration statistics (Geneva, January 2005), an expert group meeting on human rights indicators organized by the University of Turku and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Turku, Finland, March 2005), and the International Conference on the Strengthening of Sub-regional Economic Cooperation in Central Asia and the Future of SPECA (Astana, May 2005).

29. The joint work with The World Bank Institute, UNDP, UNFPA, USAID and the US Census Bureau to provide technical cooperation in the field of gender statistics continued. A workshop for Central Asian countries was carried out in 2005 and a new project for activities in 2006-2008 was developed jointly by all concerned agencies and was supported by the World Bank.

30. A technical cooperation visit to the statistical offices of Moldova and Ukraine took place in November 2005 to discuss measurement of non-observed economy and other issues related to compilation of national accounts.

II. PLANS AND MAJOR CHALLENGES FOR 2006

31. The work plan for the UNECE Statistical Division is outlined, together with the statistical activities of other divisions of the UNECE, in the UNECE Statistical Programme 2006. The modifications in the work programme required by the UNECE reform were included to the extent possible when the programme was approved by the CES Bureau in October 2005. The possibility of subsequent additional amendments as a consequence of the implementation of the UNECE reform was recognised by the Bureau.

32. One decision taken after the October 2005 Bureau meeting was the reduction of five posts in the data work for economic statistics. Two posts were redeployed within the division, whereas three posts were transferred to other divisions of the UNECE. As a consequence, the number of macroeconomic data series and their periodicity was reduced considerably.

33. The major challenge in 2006 will be to implement, with a 10% reduction of staff, the other decisions of the UNECE reform concerning the statistical sub-programme, i.e.:

- (a) strengthening the coordination of international statistical work;
- (b) strengthening the methodological work;
- (c) strengthening the technical cooperation activities;
- (d) carrying out an external review of the on-line database (economic and gender databases);
- (e) improving the functionalities of the on-line database;
- (f) reviewing the publications;
- (g) setting up and maintaining a database on MDG indicators using the database and dissemination infrastructure of the statistical sub-programme.

34. Some of these activities will stretch beyond 2006. The setting up and maintenance of a

MDG database for the region (item g)) can only be implemented in cooperation with other agencies, and with funding from external sources. With regard to item b), the major result in 2006 will be the adoption of the Recommendations for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses. Another important topic concerns the development of indicators of sustainability in the framework of official statistics - a follow-up activity of the CES 2005 plenary session. In addition to population censuses, the Conference of European Statisticians 2006 will address the issue of human resources development in statistical offices/departments. Concerning item c), the 3 years Development Account Project for statistical capacity building in Central Asia will start to be implemented as part of the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA).

35. The Internet will be the priority channel for dissemination of information to users. In implementing item f) above, some of the products will disappear entirely; in addition to the publication "Trends in Europe and North America", published every second year until 2004, the quarterly "Statistical Journal of UNECE" will also be discontinued once all issues for the year 2006 are finalized.

36. Another element of implementing the UNECE reform relates to the annual reporting of the planned activities of the Conference to the newly created UNECE Executive Committee. The first meeting between members of the CES Bureau and the Executive Committee on the work programme for 2007 is scheduled for November 2006.

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