



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

CES/2002/2
3 April 2002

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Fiftieth plenary session
(Paris, 10-12 June 2002)

**SUMMARY REPORT ON THE 33rd SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
STATISTICAL COMMISSION**

Note prepared by the secretariat

1. The United Nations Statistical Commission is one of the two parent bodies of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). Consequently, the CES has always paid attention to the deliberations and concerns of this important forum in the global statistical system. It is customary, therefore, that at the plenary session of the CES a summary report of the annual session of the Statistical Commission is provided to the Conference in order to inform it of the main outcome of the most recent session of the Commission.
2. The most recent session of the Statistical Commission was its 33rd that was held in New York from 5-8 March 2002. The following ECE Member States who are elected members of the Statistical Commission attended the session: Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom and United States. In addition, the following ECE Member States attended the session as Observers: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
3. The Commission reviewed the ongoing work of groups of countries and international organizations in various fields of demographic, social, economic and environmental statistics and on certain cross-cutting issues in statistics. A summary report on the main conclusions of the meeting, organized according to the structure of the Conference of European Statistician's work programme and based on the summary report that the UN Statistics Division prepared, is presented below. These conclusions are the ones that the ECE secretariat considers as being of potentially greatest interest to ECE Member States.

GE.02-

4. **Recommended Action by the CES:** The Conference is asked to note the conclusions reached by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session, and to consider whether those conclusions should have any implications for the programme of work of the Conference of European Statisticians, and whether it wishes to identify any specific points on which it would like the CES Bureau to follow up on behalf of the Conference during the Bureau's 2002/2003 meetings.

Summary of the main conclusions reached at the 33rd session of the Statistical Commission

a) Programme Activity 1: Organisation and operation of statistical services

5. PE 1.1, Promotion and coordination of multilateral statistical work: The Commission welcomed the interim results of the inquiry into the instances of duplication of statistical data collection that countries had identified, and the intention of the involved organizations to complete their follow-up of all the instances cited; welcomed the intention of the UNSD, working with all the agencies of the (former) ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, to develop proposals for the next session of the Commission on how to proceed more broadly and address more comprehensively the problem of duplication of data collection; stressed the need for international organizations to strengthen the coordination of their statistical activities; and requested the international organizations to develop a new system for effective coordination given that the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities had been disbanded effective 31 December 2001.

6. The Commission also noted or gave direction to work of the Paris Group on Labour and Compensation, the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics, the Siena Group for Social Statistics, the Washington Group on Disability Measurement, the Round Table on Business Survey Frames, the Ottawa Group on Price Indexes, the Inter-secretariat Working Group on Price Statistics, the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics, the London Group on Environmental Accounting, and the Task Force on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange.

7. The Commission also noted the programme of expert group meetings and training workshops proposed by the UNSD for 2002 and 2003 and endorsed the priorities set for UNSD for the next year, namely, on millennium indicators, the implementation of the SEEA, a comprehensive review of data quality and timeliness, determination of the scope for social statistics activities and the statistical capacity building undertaken and planned under the Development Account and the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation.

8. PE 1.2, Management and policy issues of direct concern to Presidents of NSIs: The Commission welcomed the finalisation of the Handbook of Statistical Organization, Third Edition: The Operation and Organisation of a Statistical Agency and the expressions of interest by countries and organizations to translate the Handbook into all the official languages of the United Nations;

9. PE 1.3, Countries in transition in the ECE Region and PE 1.4, Relations with countries outside the ECE Region: The Commission noted the ECOSOC affirmation in resolution 2000/27 of the importance of national efforts to build statistical capacity and considered that regional programmes of statistics should have a strong element of capacity building; considered that regional programmes of statistics should focus on priority areas of the countries in the region; emphasized that there should be recognition at the regional level of the links with global statistical programmes, so that regional and global programmes complement each other; and considered that governance arrangements at the regional level should be prominent within the respective regional conference structures.

10. The Commission also reaffirmed the "practical guidelines for good practices in technical cooperation in statistics", which it had endorsed at its 1999 session, and in particular the need for technical cooperation activities to be demand-oriented and not donor driven, nationally owned and tailored to the local needs, and effectively coordinated.

b) Programme Activity 2: Technical infrastructure and other cross-cutting issues

11. PE 2.3, Dissemination and interchange of statistical information: The Commission noted that the collection and maintenance of metadata is a labour-intensive exercise and that there is need for collaboration among international organizations in order to avoid duplication in the reporting of metadata; it called for convergence between the General Data Dissemination System and indicator frameworks currently being developed and for a convergence of the respective technical cooperation support activities.

12. The Commission recognized e-commerce as an emerging phenomenon of significant potential economic and social impact which requires measurement, and took note of the work being undertaken to define and measure e-commerce in a number of countries, the problems involved, observations on the need to produce not only timely but good quality statistics and the importance of integrating them into policy formulation.

c) Programme Activity 3: Economic statistics

13. PE 3.1, Implementation of the SNA: The Commission recommended that the UNSD examine the possibility of collecting data on quarterly national accounts in addition to annual national accounts.

14. Environment and economic accounts: The Commission requested that the revised Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting handbook be published as soon as possible incorporating the changes to the draft that had been recommended by the Friends of the Chair.

15. PE 3.2, Money and banking, government finance, and balance of payments: The Commission welcomed the publication by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of the Government Finance Statistics Manual 2001 and endorsed the IMF's efforts to publish companion materials on the web over time.

16. PE 3.3, International trade in goods: The Commission endorsed a work programme leading to the revision of the Central Product Classification (CPC) and International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) in 2007 and welcomed the proposed changes in the convergence process for the General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities (NACE) and the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) which would allow for greater integration of this work into the ISIC revision process.

17. PE 3.9, Price statistics, including PPPs: The Commission recognised that the World Bank had made considerable progress in developing an overall strategy for the implementation of a global ICP; supported that implementation as soon as possible but in a time frame that allowed for high quality data to be produced; and endorsed the selection of the World Bank as the most appropriate location for the international secretariat for the global coordination and management of the programme.

d) Programme Activity 4: Social and demographic statistics

18. PE 4.2a, Population and housing censuses: The Commission approved a programme of actions to be taken by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) in support of population and housing censuses that will be undertaken by countries between 2005 and 2014.

19. PE 4.9, Health statistics: The Commission requested the World Health Organization to strengthen coordination of its statistical programme with those of international agencies and countries and continue to improve the rigour of the methods used to generate statistics for its World Health Report.

20. PE 4.11a, Social indicators and frameworks: The Commission endorsed the recommendations made by the Friends of the Chair (on indicators), in particular the recommendation on establishing a standing committee for indicators, supported by UNSD as the secretariat; it expressed the opinion that further harmonization and rationalization of indicators is needed, in particular with respect to the recent emergence of the Millennium Declaration indicator set; it agreed that the report of the Friends of the Chair be submitted to the Economic and Social Council along with the concerns voiced by the Commission with respect to the relationship between the various indicator sets, including the Millennium Indicators.

21. The Commission expressed appreciation for the improved quality of statistics in the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) but noted that further improvements were needed.

22. The Commission agreed that the actions outlined in response to policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council were consistent with the Council's requests and adequately reflected the relevant work being undertaken and planned by the Statistical Commission.

e) Programme Activity 5: Environment statistics

23. PE 5.2, Environmental accounts: The Commission requested that the revised Integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting handbook be published as soon as possible incorporating the changes to the draft that had been recommended by the Friends of the Chair.
