



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
13 June 2017

English only

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Conference of European Statisticians

#### Sixty-fifth plenary session

Geneva, 19-21 June 2017

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

**Matters arising from the 67<sup>th</sup> session of Economic Commission for Europe and the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Statistical Commission**

### **Matters arising from the sessions of the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Statistical Commission**

#### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### *Summary*

The document presents the key outcomes of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (25 April 2017), the 67th session of the Economic Commission for Europe (26-27 April 2017) and the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (7-10 March 2017). The note focuses on the discussions and decisions of these bodies that have a bearing on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians.

The document is submitted to the Conference of European Statisticians for information.

## **I. Introduction**

1. The document presents the key outcomes of a Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (25 April 2017), the 67th session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (26-27 April 2017, Geneva) and the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) (7-10 March 2017, New York). Only those discussions and decisions of these bodies are presented that have a bearing on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES).
2. The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on 25 April included a round table on “Data and Monitoring”. Section II.A of this document reflects the conclusions of the round table. Section II.B reflects the relevant decisions of the UNECE Commission session.
3. UNSC discusses each year, among other issues, work of one of the UN Regional Commissions in statistics. This year the discussion focused on the statistical work in the UNECE region, carried out under CES. Section III of this document presents the outcomes of this discussion and other decisions of UNSC with particular relevance to CES.
4. The following sections include extracts of summaries of discussions and key decisions of the above mentioned meetings. For the full texts, please consult the reports of the UNECE Commission session and UNSC, respectively at: [www.unece.org/index.php?id=45294](http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=45294), and at: [unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/documents/](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/48th-session/documents/)

## **II. 67<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe**

### **A. Regional Forum on Sustainable Development**

5. The Regional Forum on Sustainable Development that preceded the UNECE Commission session on 25 April 2017 included three round table discussions, one of which focused on “Data and Monitoring”. The discussion was structured around the role and limits of official statistics, cooperation between policy-makers and statisticians, strengthening of statistical capacities, and coordination and cooperation between different actors.
6. The UNECE member States made the following key conclusions at the Regional Forum that relate to the CES work:
  - (a) The comprehensive and ambitious 2030 Agenda underscores the importance of quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data to measure progress. National statistical offices will have a key coordinating role in generating, disseminating and administering SDG-related data. In some instances, there may be a need to strengthen the statistical institutional framework to ensure the necessary coordination with other actors, including academia and the private sector, and to improve statistical quality;
  - (b) To achieve sustainable development, it is utterly important to strengthen statistical communication and allow all users equal access to data, following the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

(c) UNECE member States are currently able to produce roughly about one third of the SDG indicators, and even developed countries with strong statistical systems cannot produce more than half. Therefore, all countries need to increase their statistical capacity;

(d) Addressing the challenges faced by statistical systems requires political support and additional financial resources. Education to improve statistical literacy among the present and future generations will be necessary. International organizations underlined the necessity for the United Nations system to come together and develop joint capacity building programmes for developing and developed countries;

(e) The Regional Road Map developed by the UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs was considered a useful tool to provide practical guidance to member States to build up a robust SDG measurement system;

(f) Civil society organizations, among others, pointed to a particular need for more and better quality data on specific issues and groups, such as migration, human trafficking, early marriage, older persons and persons with disabilities;

(g) Several participants suggested going beyond the baseline established in the global indicator framework in the UNECE region and developing more ambitious indicators to take the lead on specific issues, for example with regard to gender equality;

(h) Participants emphasized areas that are new to official statistics, including governance or means of implementation. Methods to measure new areas to official statistics in an internationally agreed and comparable way need to be developed;

(i) Some SDG indicators need to come from outside of official statistics. Work on the missing SDG indicators should not distract member States from developing and strengthening their national statistical systems;

(j) Using alternative data sources will bring its own challenges related to quality and sustainable availability. Ensuring data confidentiality and reducing respondent burden are also important concerns. The Conference of European Statisticians through its High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) is working actively to explore the use of new data sources, such as administrative registers and Big Data;

(k) Several participants highlighted the need to streamline the different international reporting processes. At the same time, no country or organization can succeed on its own. Member States encouraged UNECE to continue the dialogue in the Regional Forum on a regular basis.

## **B. UNECE Commission decision C (67) on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management**

7. The UNECE Commission session, on 26-27 April, took a decision on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management. The Commission decided to:

(a) Request UNECE, Statistical Division, to engage with the United Nations Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM:Europe), within existing resources, to gain a better understanding of how geospatial information can complement and support existing UNECE activities, particularly in the area of reviewing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, and

(b) Request UNECE, Statistical Division, to present a detailed proposal for collaboration between the two bodies for the consideration of the UNECE Executive Committee before December 2017. The proposal should take into account the CES decision

of April 2016 to support professional forums for statistical and geospatial experts to share good practices and learn from one another (ECE/CES/91), and a forthcoming decision on the nature and scope of this collaboration by the UN-GGIM:Europe Plenary Session, to be held on 7-8 June 2017, in Brussels.

8. The initiative will be discussed further at the CES plenary session, on 19 June 2017, under agenda item 5 on integrating geospatial data and official statistics, based on document ECE/CES/2017/12. The discussion will reflect on the recent discussions by the UNECE Commission session, UNECE Executive Committee and the UN-GGIM:Europe.

### **C. Other remarks related to the UNECE statistical work expressed at the Commission session**

9. During the UNECE Commission session, member States made the following remarks regarding UNECE work in statistics:

(a) The statistical work carried out by UNECE is high-quality, well-appreciated and widely-used, including beyond the region, as it is essential for advancing measurement for informed decision-making;

(b) UNECE can facilitate effective solutions by strengthening cross-sectoral work across its programmes — from trade, transport and environment to energy, forests, housing and statistics — and by strengthening its partnerships with other international organizations, the private sector, and civil society;

(c) UNECE has accumulated expertise to help governments through standard setting and performance reviews related to SDGs. Exchanging best practices could be a core task for global and regional partnerships. Regional mechanisms could support the measurement of progress, as well as foster cooperation and formulate best practices towards the SDG targets that require regional solutions;

(d) Monitoring SDG implementation requires strengthening statistical capacity, so available data allows informed decisions that take into account inequalities and the position of different groups. A wide range of partners need to be involved in both implementation and monitoring. UNECE can play an important role in the provision of technical expertise and capacity building;

(e) UNECE and UN Environment have agreements on collaboration in many areas such as health, environment, clean transport, air quality, environmental data and green economy, including active collaboration of UNECE and UN Environment in statistical capacity building.

## **III. 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission**

### **A. Decision 48/101: Global indicator framework for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

10. “The Statistical Commission:

(b) *Agreed with the revised global indicator framework for the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development...*;

(c) *Emphasized that ...; alternative or complementary indicators for regional, national and subnational levels of monitoring will be developed at the regional and national levels based on national priorities, realities, capacities and circumstances;*

(d) ...agreed with the proposed plan for annual refinements of the indicators and the two comprehensive reviews to be presented to the Commission in 2020 and 2025, respectively;

(h) Stressed that work needs to be accelerated for the development of Tier III indicators;

(i) Recommended increased capacity building and technical assistance activities to ensure that statistical capacities are strengthened to fulfil these data requirements...;

(j) ...and agreed to include in the agenda of the next session of the Commission an item on ageing and age disaggregated data.”

11. CES is carrying out work to support the global processes reflected in the above decisions, including:

(a) The CES plenary session in 2017 will discuss the *Road Map for Statistics on SDGs, First Edition*. The aim of the document is to support UNECE member States in their work related to statistics for SDGs. The UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs and the Task Force on National Reporting Platforms undertake concrete actions to implement the Road Map and to improve measurement of progress towards SDGs;

(b) UNECE is involved in the United Nations Development Account Programme for Data and Statistics, and provides a number of capacity building activities, advisory missions and training workshops in support of developing statistics for SDGs in the economic, social, environmental and infrastructure pillars of the programme;

(d) The CES plenary session endorsed *Recommendations on Ageing-related Statistics* in April 2016. Work is now ongoing within a UNECE Task Force on Measuring Old-age Population in Institutions to support member States in improving the availability and comparability of age-disaggregated data.

## **B. Decision 48/103: Transformative agenda for official statistics**

12. “*The Statistical Commission:*

(c) Agreed with the proposed updating of the 2003 *Handbook on Statistical Organization* and supported the organization of focused thematic conferences, working closely with relevant partners and building on existing bodies of work in the respective thematic areas;”

13. The following CES initiatives provide a useful starting point for updating the *Handbook on Statistical Organization*:

(a) The findings of the UNECE Task Force on Common Elements of Statistical Legislation that relate to the legal and institutional frameworks in countries with different governance models for their statistical systems;

(b) The experience gained within the HLG-MOS work related to the organization of statistical systems, including the recent High-level Seminar on the Process-oriented Approach to Statistical Production, held on 19-21 April 2017 in South Korea;

(c) The related HLG-MOS models that consider the organization of statistical offices, such as the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO) and the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA).

(d) The guidelines released by HLG-MOS related to organizational frameworks, including Guidelines for Managers and Guidelines on Risk Management in Statistical Organisations.

### **C. Decision 48/104: Regional statistical development**

14. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(b) *Expressed its appreciation for the work undertaken in the UNECE region, especially for its focus on emerging topics in statistics, including modernization and measurement of the value of official statistics, legal frameworks of official statistics, exchange and sharing of economic data and disaster risk reduction, which are also topics of interest to the global statistical community;*

(c) *Stressed the importance of capacity building for countries in the region, including in the new statistical areas;*

(d) *Noted the potential global applicability and usefulness of guidelines developed by the Conference of European Statisticians, including on measuring human capital, migration, poverty, global production, statistical business registers and climate change-related statistics, especially for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and encouraged the UNECE Statistical Division and the UN Statistics Division to collaborate closely in this context;*

(e) *Recognized the importance of collaboration among Regional Commissions to address shared development challenges, in particular related to the need to strengthen statistical systems in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”*

### **D. Decision 48/106: Quality assurance in the global statistical system**

15. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(d) *Stressed the importance of high-quality and disaggregated data for the full implementation and reporting of the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and global levels...;*

(e) *Requested the Expert Group (on National Quality Assurance Frameworks) to take into account the work on data quality already undertaken at the national, regional and global levels, to avoid duplicating existing efforts and with a view to harmonizing existing frameworks, and to consider the relationship to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; “*

16. The following recent outcomes of CES work could be useful as input to the Expert Group on National Quality Assurance Frameworks:

(a) The CES plenary session will review the draft *Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics*, on 20 June 2017, that consider the central role of quality assurance in value generation for official statistics;

(b) The HLG-MOS project that investigated the implications of big data for the quality of official statistics and developed in 2014 a preliminary framework for national statistical offices to conceptualize big data quality.

(c) The HLG-MOS Supporting Standards Modernisation Group has defined a set of quality indicators for surveys and administrative data to help statistical organizations monitor the quality of the statistical production process.

## **E. Decision 48/107: Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics**

17. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(a) *Reiterated the growing importance of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and noted existing national commitments;*

(b) *Agreed to establish a Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;*

(d) *Cautioned against changing the Fundamental Principles at this point and encouraged the Group to focus its reflection on implementation and to examine a potentially widened scope of the Fundamental Principles with respect to non-official and non-traditional data;*

(f) *Also asked the Group to propose ways to give the Fundamental Principles higher visibility in particular beyond the community of official statistics;”*

18. The following CES work streams are particularly relevant for the Friends of the Chair Group on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics:

(a) The UNECE Task Force on Common Elements of Statistical Legislation is developing good practice guidance on how to reinforce legal frameworks to guarantee independence, integrity and accountability of national statistical systems and the high quality of official statistics;

(b) The draft *Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics* build on the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics as a foundation for generating value to society, and as the source of the unique value-added of official statistics that should be in the centre of statistical offices’ communication.

## **F. Decision 48/108: Integration of statistical and geospatial information**

19. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(g) *Emphasized the need for the regional statistical bodies to develop and strengthen partnerships with the regional bodies of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management given the growing importance in the context of integration of data from surveys, administrative sources and geospatial information for the SDGs, and the need to streamline statistical production processes.”*

20. Recent developments in the collaboration of the Conference of European Statisticians and UN-GGIM:Europe are reflected in document ECE/CES/2017/12 and will be discussed at the CES plenary session on 19 June 2017.

## **G. Decision 48/109: Social Statistics**

21. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(d) *Urged countries to give high priority to time-use statistics, given their increased demand and their critical role in the review and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals;*

(e) *Welcomed the draft methodological guidelines for the production of statistics on asset ownership from a gender perspective, produced by the Statistics Division and key partners under the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality project, and also welcomed the finalization of the guidelines for the production of statistics on entrepreneurship from a*

*gender perspective and the provision of technical assistance to countries interested in implementing them;*

22. The following work streams of the CES work programme on social and demographic statistics, in particular on gender statistics, are of particular relevance:

(a) The CES plenary session will be invited to review and endorse the *Guide on valuing unpaid household service work* on 21 June 2017. The Guide relies on detailed time-use statistics;

(b) The CES Bureau has established a new UNECE Task Force on Measuring Intra-household Power and Decision-making to develop guidance which will rely heavily on both time-use and asset ownership statistics;

(c) The forthcoming UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics, to be held in Belgrade on 29 November-1 December 2017, will consider, among others, the themes of measuring time-use and the economic empowerment of women including through asset ownership;

(d) Mexico is leading an in-depth review of gaps in gender statistics, to be discussed at the October 2017 meeting of the CES Bureau.

## **H. Decision 48/111: National accounts**

23. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(a) *Welcomed the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts, expressed its appreciation for the activities undertaken by the members of the Working Group, the regional commissions (including UNECE), other regional organizations and countries to facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 2 and supporting statistics...;*

(d) *Encouraged international agencies to speed up the work to set up secure data sharing mechanisms between countries to address asymmetries in cross-border flows and positions arising from the globalization of production, trade and financing;*

(e) *...and called upon the global and regional agencies to provide a focused, funded and coordinated programme not only on national accounts, but also on integrated household and business statistics, in support of the compilation of national accounts;”*

24. The CES work programme on national accounts is closely aligned with the global work process, including the following current work areas:

(a) UNECE organizes, jointly with Eurostat and OECD, regular meetings of the Group of Experts on National Accounts, focusing every second year on global production. These meetings also provide an important platform for discussing common challenges of national accounts and business statistics related to global production, such as work on large and complex enterprise units;

(b) The CES Bureau set up a new UNECE Task Force on Exchange and Sharing of Economic Data in March 2017. At the first stage of work, until spring 2018, the Task Force will analyse examples of data exchange among statistical offices to identify enablers and obstacles of data sharing. At the second stage, until spring 2020, the Task Force will develop guidance, tools and principles to facilitate the exchange of economic data. The aim is to increase statisticians' ability to analyse the activities of multinational enterprises.

## I. Decision 48/112: Environmental-economic accounting

25. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(a) *Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) in scaling up the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)...;*

(c) *Requested that the Committee of Experts continue its work on the development of SEEA-compliant databases that include the Sustainable Development Goal indicators...;*

(d) *Supported the efforts of the Committee of Experts to strengthen capacity building, which include developing in-depth courses and e-learning on SEEA modules;*

(e) *Agreed in principle with the proposed priority areas for the advancement of the research agenda for the SEEA Central Framework...;*

26. The CES work programme in support of SEEA implementation is closely aligned with the global work programme, and includes the following key activities:

(a) UNECE and OECD organize regular seminars on the implementation of SEEA. On recommendation of the seminars held in 2015 and 2016, UNECE and OECD drafted an initial work plan for the UNECE region in 2017-2020 to support the SEEA implementation in line with the UNCEEA global work programme;

(b) UNECE also contributes to the development of Global Databases for SEEA as part of the UNCEEA work plan;

(c) An e-learning course on SEEA will be organized in cooperation with UNSD and Statistics Netherlands for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia in autumn 2017, followed by a SEEA training workshop in January 2018;

(d) Capacity building related to environmental information, including SEEA, is provided through the regular meetings of the Joint UNECE Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia;

(e) UNECE is involved in the United Nations Development Account Programme for Data and Statistics, and provides a number of capacity building activities, advisory missions and training workshops in support of developing environment statistics, SEEA and environment-related SDG indicators in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia;

(f) The UNECE Task Force on a set of key climate change-related statistics using SEEA identified in its final report several issues for the SEEA research agenda. On 21 June 2017, the CES plenary session will be invited to review and endorse the *Set of Key Climate Change-related Indicators*, some of which can be derived from SEEA.

## J. Decision 48/114: Business registers

27. *“The Statistical Commission:*

(c) *Endorsed the proposal to establish United Nations guidelines for statistical business registers based on existing guidelines, notably the UNECE guidelines,...”*

28. The following CES work streams and recent outcomes of expert work in the UNECE region provide a good starting point for developing global guidelines:

(a) The CES plenary session endorsed the *Guidelines on Statistical Business Registers* in June 2015. The Guidelines consider the role of statistical business registers

central in the production of economic statistics both in terms of the way the statistics are produced and the content and quality of economic statistics;

(b) UNECE organizes, jointly with Eurostat and OECD, regular meetings of the Group of Experts on Business Registers. In 2017, the meeting will discuss the multiple roles of business registers for the modernisation of statistical production, linking with geospatial information, quality management, use of administrative data, access to new sources of micro data and the treatment of globalization in economic statistics.

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