Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-fifth plenary session
Geneva, 18-20 June 2018
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Matters arising from the 49th session
of the United Nations Statistical Commission

Matters arising from the 49th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The document presents for information the implications of key outcomes of the 49th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (6-9 March 2018) on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians.

Please recycle

I.   Introduction

1.   The document presents the key outcomes of the 49th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) (6-9 March 2018, New York) that have a bearing on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES). The note includes extracts of the decisions that are relevant for the work under CES. For the full text, please consult the report of the UNSC session at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session/documents/

II.   49th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

A.   Decision 49/101: Global indicator framework for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2.   The Statistical Commission considered a report of the Interagency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and welcomed the progress made. The following parts of the decision are particularly relevant to the work carried out under CES.

"The Statistical Commission:

(f)   Welcomed efforts by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to improve data flows and global reporting, and also welcomed the draft guidelines on data flows and global data reporting for the Sustainable Development Goals as an initial step to improve coordination and harmonization of national and international data systems and to ensure full transparency of data, metadata and data aggregates presented in the Global Sustainable Development Goal Indicators Database;

(g) Requested the Inter-Agency and Expert Group to work jointly with custodian agencies and establish a fruitful dialogue between all parties, to further refine the guidelines by taking into account concerns raised at the forty-ninth session of the Commission and to prepare criteria for implementation of the guidelines that are based on best practices and on ways to limit the burden that the envisaged procedures may represent in terms of time and resources for both national and international statistical systems and that resolve outstanding issues;

(h) Reiterated the urgent need for statistical capacity-building for countries to be able to fully implement the Sustainable Development Goal indicators;"

3.   CES is carrying out the following work to support the global processes reflected in the above decisions:

(a)   The CES plenary session in 2017 endorsed the CES *Road Map for Statistics on SDGs, First Edition[1]*. The UNECE Steering Group on Statistics for SDGs and its four groups (on national reporting platforms, data flows, communication of statistics for SDGs, and statistical capacity development) undertake concrete actions to implement the Road Map and support countries in measurement of progress towards SDGs;

(b)   In collaboration with IAEG-SDGs, the UNECE Task Team on Data Flows completed a pilot of data flows from countries to custodian agencies (that is, international organizations responsible for the production of global statistics for SDG indicators) in

---

[1] https://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47510

summer/autumn 2017. The outcome of the pilot was reported to the 6th meeting of IAEG-SDGs (Bahrein, November 2017), and provided input to the initial guidelines on data flows prepared by IAEG-SDGs and the Coordinating Committee of Statistical Activities (CCSA). Several of its practical recommendations to improve communication of data flows have already been implemented. A second pilot of data flows is planned to be conducted over summer 2018 to provide input to the next IAEG-SDG meeting in autumn 2018 and the implementation guidance on SDG data flows that IAEG-SDGs and CCSA are preparing. The second pilot will focus specifically on the difficulty of validating data not produced by the national statistical system. The pilot is aiming to propose simplified procedures to limit reporting burden for both countries and agencies while maintaining transparency of process, in line with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics;

(c) Under the United Nations Development Account Programme for Data and Statistics, UNECE provides capacity building and training in support of developing statistics for SDGs in the economic, social, environmental and infrastructure pillars for the countries of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), and South-East Europe (SEE) (for example, workshops were organized in 2017 and 2018).

4. Furthermore, the Statistical Commission:

"(i) Welcomed the recognition of the importance of data as a basis for evidence-based policies in the zero draft of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the proposed continuous engagement of the Bureau and the Statistics Division to advise on the statistical aspects of the proposed draft;

(j) Welcomed, in this context, the proposed work of the United Nations Expert Group on Migration Statistics, including the revision of international recommendations on statistics for international migration; "

5. UNECE has a longstanding work programme to improve availability, quality and international comparability of migration statistics. A number of guidelines and recommendations on migration statistics that UNECE has developed over the years can provide input to revising the recommendations on statistics for international migration, including *Defining and measuring circular migration* (2016) and the *Handbook on the use of administrative sources and sample surveys to measure international migration in CIS countries* (2016)[2]. Two recent guidance documents: *Guidance on data integration for measuring migration* and a report on *Measuring international labour mobility* are submitted to CES for endorsement in 2018.

6. The 2018 UNECE-Eurostat work session on migration statistics will discuss data integration for measuring migration, and the measurement of labour mobility, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migration. To enhance the use and exchange of migration data, UNECE will continue to update and improve its Clearing House on Migration Statistics.

B. Decision 49/102: Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

7. "The Statistical Commission:

(c) Welcomed the draft principles and guidelines for national reporting and dissemination platforms, and requested the Statistics Division to report to the Commission thereon at its fiftieth session;"

---

[2] https://www.unece.org/statistics/publications.html

8.   A UNECE Task Force on National Reporting Platforms was set up in October 2016 to document key features of national reporting platforms (NRPs) and consider conditions for developing NRPs. The Task Force has prepared two guidance materials. *National mechanisms* for *providing data on global SDG indicators[3]* (2018) describes the role of different actors in providing data for SDGs, considers factors important for making a decision on which model to use for providing national data on SDG indicators, and outlines the possible advantages and disadvantages of various approaches. The *Practical guide on National Reporting Platforms* (2018) aims to help countries in setting up an NRP based on experience from countries that already have NRPs.

9.   The work of the Task Force has contributed to widespread use of such platforms as a means for NSOs to provide national statistics for global SDG indicators. Among the members the Conference, 33 countries currently have or are preparing NRPs or similar platforms. The Task Force has also contributed to discussions of the use of national (and agency) reporting platforms at the 48th and 49th sessions of the UNSC, and to plans to prepare global guidance on the development and use of such platforms for SDG global reporting.

C.   Decision 49/104: Handbook of Statistical Organization

10.   *"The Statistical Commission:*

(c)   Endorsed the proposed structure, priorities and content of the updated Handbook, subject to suggested adaptations and refinements to be duly considered during the drafting phase of the Handbook;

(d)   Requested that the updating process be inclusive, take into account the various regional and national contexts and build on existing initiatives."

11.   The following CES initiatives provide useful input for updating the *Handbook on Statistical Organization*:

(a)   The *Generic Statistical Law[4]* for countries of the EECCA region that CES endorsed in 2016, and the *Common elements of statistical legislation* that is submitted to the CES 2018 plenary session for endorsement*;*

(b)   The experience gained within the UNECE HLG-MOS work related to the organization of statistical systems, and the related HLG-MOS models, such as the Generic Activity Model for Statistical Organizations (GAMSO) and the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA) (endorsed by CES in 2017).

(c)   The guidelines released by the UNECE HLG-MOS related to organizational frameworks, including *Guidelines for Managers[5]* and *Guidelines on Risk Management in Statistical Organisations[6]*.

(d)   The *Recommendations for promoting, measuring and communicating the value of official statistics[7]* that CES approved in 2017. The Recommendations will be published in 2018.

---

[3] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/SFSDG/Task+Force+on+National+Reporting+Platforms
[4] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2016/mtg/ECE_CES_2016_8-1601555E.pdf
[5] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/GFM/Guidelines+for+Managers
[6] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/GORM/Risk+Management

H.   Decision 49/109: National accounts

12.   *"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, other regional organizations and countries to facilitate the implementation of the System of National Accounts 2008 and supporting statistics…;

(b)   Welcomed the initiative of the Working Group to address important conceptual issues, some of which may extend beyond the 2008 SNA, and requested the Working Group to report to the Commission at its fiftieth session on progress in addressing issues related to globalization (including statistical units and factoryless goods producers), digitalization (including related price and productivity measures) and well-being and sustainability (within the scope of SNA), which are central to the global economy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,…;"

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

(a)   UNECE work on national accounts is part of the Global Implementation Programme for the 2008 SNA, mandated by UNSC. UNECE together with the partner organizations Eurostat, EFTA, CIS-Stat and UNSD carries out workshops and trainings to facilitate the implementation of the 2008 SNA in EECCA and SEE countries and strengthen the institutional cooperation between the compilers of macroeconomic statistics. The topics in 2018 include consistency between national accounts and balance of payments statistics and improvement of supply and use tables.

(b)   UNECE organizes, jointly with Eurostat and OECD, regular meetings of the Group of Experts on National Accounts. These meetings provide an important platform for discussing challenges in compiling national accounts and related economic statistics. The issues addressed by the Expert Group in 2018 closely link to the priority SNA research areas identified by the UNSC: globalization (including defining economic ownership over IPPs, work on large and complex enterprise units, data sharing), digitalization, measuring well-being and sustainability (measuring human capital and unpaid household service work). In addition, the meeting covered other key topics such as new methods and data sources for producing macroeconomic statistics; the role of satellite accounting and challenges in maintaining consistent time series. In view of the importance of the issues discussed by the Group of Experts on national accounts, and to ensure the continuity of work it is proposed to convert the Expert Group into a standing body under the Conference;

(c)   In 2018, UNECE will focus on methodological work in the areas of measuring human capital, global production and data exchange. The UNECE Task Force on Exchange and Sharing of Economic Data follows up on the main priorities identified in the UNECE *Guide to Measuring Global Production* (2015) related to the activities of multinational enterprises. The aim is to find new ways to measure global production and trade more coherently, improve data quality and increase efficiency of statistical production. The Task Force is looking at examples of data exchange among statistical offices to identify enablers and obstacles of data sharing. In 2018, the Task Force will present its first results and will continue work to develop guidance, tools and principles to facilitate the exchange of economic data. Furthermore, UNECE will continue to collaborate

---

[7] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2017/CES_4-Value_of_Official_Statistics_for_endorsement_for_upload.pdf

with other international expert groups dealing with the impact of globalization on economic statistics e.g. it will contribute to the preparation of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) *Handbook on accounting for global value chains*.

(d)   The UNECE Task Force on Satellite Accounts for Education and Training follows up on the research agenda of the CES *Guide on Measuring Human Capital*. The objective of the Task Force will be to develop a framework and coordinate the pilot testing of satellite accounts on education and training in countries with different economic circumstances and data availability. Based on the pilot testing, the Task Force will develop a compilation guide that will help countries construct internationally comparable satellite accounts on education and training which will lead to improved cost-based measurement of human capital.

I.   Decision 49/110: Environmental-economic accounting

14.   "The Statistical Commission:

(a)   Expressed its appreciation for the work of the Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) as detailed in its report, noted the increased uptake and growing importance of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), and urged the Committee to scale up its work on the implementation of SEEA;

(f)   Commended the Committee of Experts for its efforts to strengthen capacity-building in countries through increased coordination, e-learning, face-to- face workshops and in-country technical assistance, ensuring that countries' needs are met in an efficient manner, ...;

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

(a)   OECD and UNECE organize regular seminars on the implementation of SEEA. The next seminar is planned to take place in February 2019;

(b)   Under the United Nations Development Account Programme for Data and Statistics UNECE provides capacity building to EECCA and SEE countries in the areas of environment statistics, SEEA and environment-related SDG indicators. The recent activities include a regional workshop in Almaty, Kazakhstan (jointly with UNESCAP, 15-17 November 2017), e-learning course and a following workshop in Minsk, Belarus (jointly with UNSD and Statistics Netherlands, 15-18 January 2018), and national workshops in Almaty, Kazakhstan (25-28 April 2017) and Dushanbe, Tajikistan (16-18 October 2017). The forthcoming events include a national training workshop on environment statistics, energy and forest accounts on 11-14 June 2018 (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, jointly with the Kyrgyz statistical office, UNESCAP, UNEP and UNDP), a workshop on waste and material flow accounting in July 2018 (Astana, Kazakhstan, jointly with UNEP); and a workshop on energy accounts in March 2019 (Dushanbe, Tajikistan (tbc), jointly with IEA and ESCAP).

(c)   Capacity building related to environmental information, including SEEA, is also provided through the regular meetings of the Joint UNECE Task Force on Environmental Statistics and Indicators for Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia, the next one taking place in October 2018 in Geneva.

J. Decision 49/113: Climate change statistics

16. *"The Statistical Commission:*

(a) Welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, prepared by the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe and for the first time also with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to promote the policy and statistics interface;

(h) Expressed its support for the work being undertaken by the task force of the Economic Commission for Europe on the core set of climate change-related indicators, and encouraged countries to pilot the initial set of key indicators developed by the task force and to prepare national road maps for the development of climate change-related statistics;

(i) Welcomed the harmonized and coordinated efforts being undertaken by the Statistics Division and the Economic Commission for Europe in terms of methodological work and the development of indicators, and encouraged the continuation of those efforts;

(k) Welcomed a greater focus on disaster-related statistics given the importance of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and decided to include in the agenda of its fiftieth session a separate item on this topic, building on existing work in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction"

17. UNECE has been the frontrunner globally in the work on climate change-related statistics. Currently the work is focused on the implementation of the *Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics*[8] (2014). The Recommendations were the result of a collaborative effort of national statistical offices, agencies in charge of emission inventories, international statistical organizations and climate organizations.

18. The work in this area is led by a Steering Group (chaired until recently by Norway, currently by Luxembourg). Several tools have been prepared to support the implementation, such as an example road map for developing climate-change related statistics in countries; a narrative for communication with stakeholders to help demonstrate the added value that official statisticians offer to the monitoring of climate change, and a wiki for sharing good practices[9]. The Steering Group organizes Expert Forums for producers and users of climate change-related statistics that bring the various stakeholders together to share experience and agree on further work. The next Expert Forum will be held in Geneva, on 2-4 October 2018.

19. As a follow-up to the Recommendations, CES launched work to develop a set of climate change-related indicators (by a Task Force led by Italy). CES endorsed the report presenting the initial set of indicators in June 2017 and agreed on pilot testing the set. The first outcomes of pilot testing of the initial set were summarised in a background paper to UNSC[10], as they may provide important input to the work at the global level. UNECE is currently refining the initial set of core climate change-related indicators based on the outcomes of the pilot testing.

20. A UNECE Task Force (also led by Italy) aims to clarify the role of official statistics in measuring extreme events and disasters, and identify practical steps for national

---

[8]   The Conference of European Statisticians Recommendations on Climate Change-Related Statistics: www.unece.org/index.php?id=37166

[9] https://statswiki.unece.org/display/GPCCS

[10] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/49th-session/documents/BG-Item3k-UNECE-E.pdf

statistical offices in support of disaster management and risk reduction. The work is carried out in coordination with national agencies responsible for disaster management, and is coordinated closely with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), UNSD and the ESCAP Expert Group on Disaster-related statistics. The UNECE Task Force is currently drafting guidelines on the role of national statistical offices in measuring extreme events and disasters, taking into consideration relevant information needs of the Sendai Framework on Disaster-risk Reduction and SDGs. The guidelines are planned to be finalised by February 2019, to be submitted to the CES plenary session for endorsement in June 2019.

K.   Decision 49/115: Refugee statistics

21.   The Statistical Commission:

(b)   ... endorsed the international recommendations on refugee statistics and the technical report on statistics on internally displaced persons, taking full account of comments received during the discussion;

(d)   Recognized the challenges in implementing the recommendations on refugee statistics and internally displaced persons statistics, and expressed support for the development of a compiler's manual to provide hands-on guidance and a refined methodology in collecting statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons;

(f)   Acknowledged the importance of a harmonized statistical framework on refugees and internally displaced persons statistics for comparable data within a country and between countries and international agencies, and emphasized that all data sources, including population censuses, sample surveys and administrative sources, should be used;

(g)   Expressed the need for clear definitions of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons and the need for national statistical capacity-building to support Member States in improving the quality and availability of statistics on refugees and internally displaced persons, and invited international and regional organizations to support Member States in this regard, at their request;

22.   Statistics on asylum seekers and refugees are regularly discussed at the UNECE-Eurostat work sessions on migration statistics, including at the 2018 session in October. These discussions will consider the role of national statistical offices in applying the new international recommendations on refugees statistics, and support member States in producing statistics on refugees.