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**Joint ECE/Eurostat Meeting on the Management of Statistical Information Technology
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Topic (iii): Resource management in statistical offices and the role of the IT departments

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

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ROOM PAPER

1. Use of the internet has made possible radical changes in the way statistical agencies collect and disseminate data. Aside from the technical challenges, the use of the internet poses many management challenges. Below are some of the issues that can be discussed regarding the way that statistical agencies have to reexamine their management practices in light of the increasing use of the internet.
2. Changes in information technology are driving structural changes in some statistical agencies that are organized around subject matter programs. For example, many agencies are currently organized around programs such as economic and demographic statistics. However, advances in technology, particularly the internet, are now enabling some agencies to organize around functions, such as data collection and data dissemination. What are the benefits of organizing around these functions? How would such an organizational structure affect the management of key areas such as quality of the data, timeliness of data release, and survey design?
3. Use of the internet can result in significant monetary savings in both data collection and data dissemination, for example through the use of Computer Self Administered Questionnaires (CSAQ) and a reduction in paper based data products. However, a large investment up front is usually required on the part of agencies making this transition. This investment can be paid for using a variety of methods. Use of these methods may depend on the structure of the agency and whether IT services are being provided in a centralized or decentralized environment. What are the advantages and disadvantages of various cost recovery strategies, (such as the central IT organization charging internal programs a fee for service,

central IT charging programs a flat rate per employee, charging outside customers for data disseminated over the internet, getting a direct appropriation from legislators) to fund internet technology development?

4. One issue regarding use of the internet to disseminate data is how far to go in enabling data users to access data from several agencies (both national and international) through one portal. However, even within one agency, IT development and management may be decentralized and data from different surveys may not be easily shared and cross tabulated between program areas. What are effective methods that agencies can use to promote common standards, practices, and quality control in a decentralized environment? How does this affect strategic and operational planning throughout the organization? What is the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) in directing the methods used by program areas?

5. During a transition from paper and CD-ROM based data dissemination to web based dissemination, an agency is forced to maintain capability for using several different media. This can be quite costly. Are there ways to minimize the inefficiencies that can result from using various media to disseminate data? How do these affect the users?