

Third Meeting of the 2011/2012 Bureau
Luxembourg, 7-8 February 2012

For information

Item 10 of the Provisional
Agenda

THE UN BIENNIAL PLANNING AND REPORTING CYCLE AND THE RELATED DOCUMENTS

Prepared by the UNECE secretariat

I. BACKGROUND

1. In November 2011, the CES Bureau asked the secretariat to prepare a paper explaining the various documents that the Bureau needs to review and approve in the context of the UN biennial planning cycle.

2. The current paper gives a short overview of the UN biennial planning and reporting process. It describes the related documents that have to be adopted at various levels, and provides information on the documents that will be submitted to the Bureau and CES for approval in 2012-2013.

3. **In this connection, the following three documents are submitted to the 2012 February meeting of the Bureau for approval:**

- (a) Biennial Evaluation Plan 2012-2013: ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/20/Add.1.
- (b) Biennial Evaluation Report 2010-2011: ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/20/Add.2.
- (c) Implementation of the Statistical Programme 2011: ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/20/Add.3;

II. GENERAL OVERVIEW

4. The United Nations (UN) applies a biennial planning and reporting cycle. The planning, monitoring and evaluation are based on a logical framework which is a tool for results-based management (RBM). RBM assists UN in systematic assessment of the relevance, effectiveness and impact of its work. It emphasizes the measurement of outcome over output, thus aiming to enhance transparency and increase effectiveness in delivery.

5. The logical framework describes how a programme works to achieve results; lists indicators to measure the performance, and aims to communicate the complex programmes in a harmonized way across the UN system. The framework starts with defining the following: the problems to be addressed, desirable results, and the conditions that have to be met to progress towards the overall objective. It determines the outputs, activities and resources necessary for a successful outcome of work.

6. The preparation of the planning and reporting documents begins three years before the start of the biennium with the drafting of a Strategic Framework. The cycle finishes with the

Biennial Evaluation Report that is usually prepared during the first half of the year following the biennium.

7. Figure 1 presents the related formal planning and reporting documents.

8. The documents are reviewed at different levels. **The documents are first reviewed/adopted by the Sectoral Committees of each subprogramme, such as the Conference of European Statisticians through its Bureau**, then by the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) (if applicable), and finally by the UN General Assembly and its Fifth Committee (if applicable).

9. The following formal documents of the biennial cycle are finally reported to or adopted at the UN level (by the 5th Committee of the UN General Assembly). These are presented in the first row of Figure 1:

- **Strategic Framework** that sets out objectives and strategy for the subprogramme.
- **Programme Budget Narrative** that delineates the number of outputs and resources.
- **Programme Performance Report** that describes the accomplishments achieved.

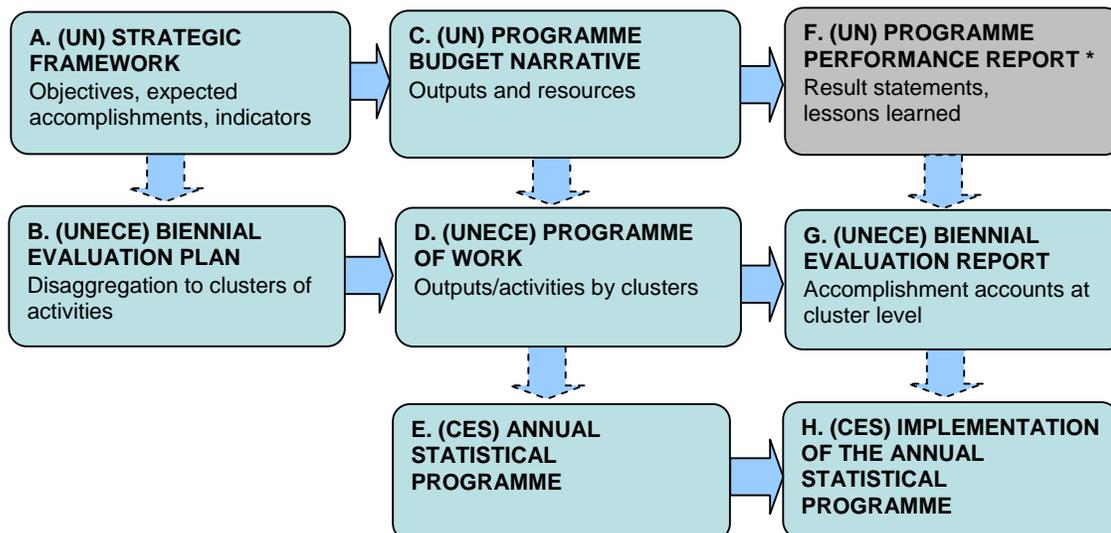
10. The following documents are finally reported to or adopted at the UNECE level (by the UNECE EXCOM), presented in the second row of Figure 1:

- **Programme of Work** that lists outputs, including meetings, publications and capacity building activities.
- **Biennial Evaluation Plan** that links the UN level planning to the UNECE level.
- **Biennial Evaluation Report** that reports the outcome of work at the UNECE level (accomplishment accounts at a cluster level).

11. The following documents are adopted/reported at the level of the CES and its Bureau, presented in the third row of Figure 1:

- **Annual Statistical Programme** that describes the work in a more substantive way.
- **Report on the implementation of the annual statistical programme** that lists the results achieved and outputs produced.

12. The papers submitted for approval at the UN level include less detail than those adopted by the UNECE bodies. More information about each of the documents is provided in sections III and IV.

Figure 1. Documents prepared in the biennial programmatic cycle

* This document is presented in online format only. It is not submitted to the CES and Bureau for approval.

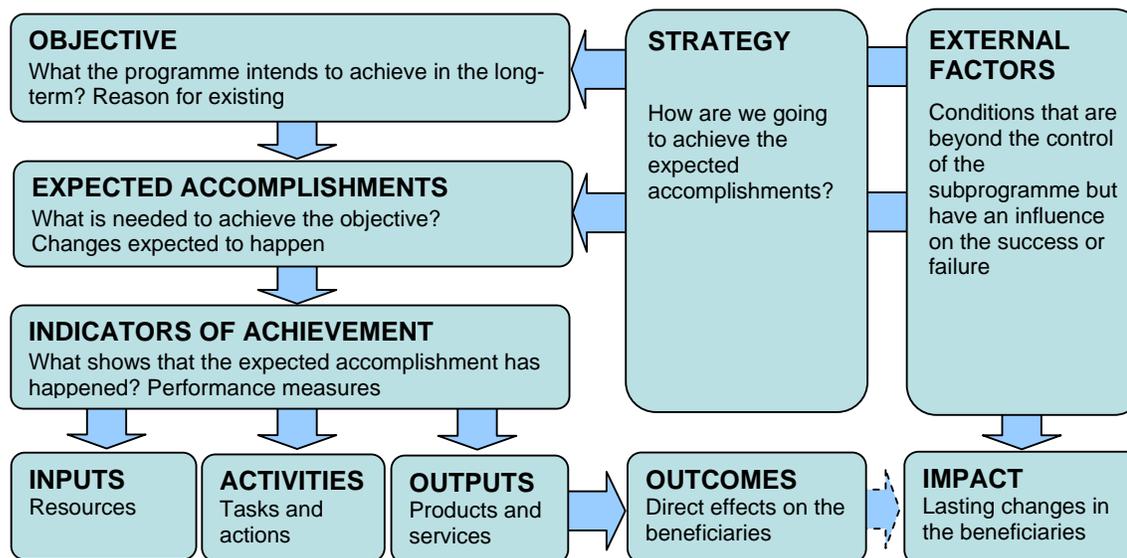
III. PLANNING AND BUDGETING

A. Strategic Framework

13. The preparation of the biennial programme starts three years before the beginning of the biennium with the definition of a Strategic Framework, the basis for allocating and justifying the budget needed for activities. The Strategic Framework delineates the objectives, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement, strategy and mandates for each subprogramme. It describes the desired outcome in the longer term, the goals are usually not fully achieved within one biennium. For the statistics subprogramme, the objective is “*to improve the quality of official statistics at the national and international levels, and to ensure the coordination of international statistical activities undertaken in the ECE region*”.

14. The Strategic Framework is built around the main areas of work. For the statistics subprogramme, these include four areas: *coordination of international statistical work, methodological work, capacity building and the UNECE statistical database*. About three-four most representative expected accomplishments are formulated for each subprogramme. For example, *streamlined international statistical work* is the expected accomplishment in the area of *coordination of international statistical work*. Progress is measured with a maximum of two indicators of achievement for each expected accomplishment. Figure 2 describes the structure of the planning tools.

15. **The Bureau approved the Strategic Framework for 2014-2015 at its meeting in November 2011.**

Figure 2. The structure of the planning tools**B. Biennial Evaluation Plan**

16. The Biennial Evaluation Plan provides more detail for the Strategic Framework at the UNECE level. It establishes links between the expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement of the Strategic Framework and those presented by clusters of activities in the Programme of Work (described in Section III.D). For example, the area “*methodological work*” is divided into four clusters: *economic statistics, social and demographic statistics, environment and sustainable development statistics, and cross-cutting issues of statistics*).

17. **The Biennial Evaluation Plan for 2012-2013 is presented to the Bureau for approval at its meeting in February 2012** as the document number ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/20 Add.1.

C. Programme Budget Narrative

18. Budget deliberations begin two years before the biennium to allow time for the preparation and consultations with member countries. The Programme Budget Narrative is prepared in line with the Strategic Framework. Its aim is to analyse and review resources and activities to ensure optimal utilization of resources.

19. The Programme Budget Narrative includes information on the resources and staff required at the UNECE level to achieve the expected accomplishments. At the subprogramme level, the Programme Budget Narrative lists the number of outputs for the biennium, such as the meeting sessions to be organized, official reports by topic, publications and other substantive outputs as well as capacity building activities.

20. **The Programme Budget Narrative for 2014-2015 will be presented to the Bureau meeting in autumn 2012.**

D. Programme of Work

21. The Programme of Work is finalised just before the beginning of the biennium. It is prepared according to a common UNECE template, and it lists the concrete outputs for each subprogramme, including names of meetings, publications and capacity building activities. The Programme of Work provides a mandate for the activities within UNECE and is used for planning the volume of support activities in the secretariat.

22. In this document the planned activities are presented according to the main work areas of the Strategic Framework. Some larger areas of work are divided into smaller parts called 'clusters of activity'. For example, in the Statistics subprogramme *methodological work* has been divided into four clusters of activities by statistical domains.

23. The plan is based on the established objective and expected accomplishments of the Strategic Framework and the number of outputs set out in the Programme Budget Narrative. Any additions or other changes in the Programme of Work from the Budget are highlighted. Sometimes changes cannot be avoided as the Programme Budgets are drafted two years before the start of the biennium.

24. The Bureau approved the Programme of Work for 2012-2013 at its meeting in November 2011.

E. Annual Statistical Programme

25. The UNECE Statistical Division prepares an Annual Statistical Programme describing each forthcoming year in a more substantive way. The text is used for various reporting and public relations purposes and is targeted at different audiences: members of the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM), members of the Conference, staff in the statistical offices and international organizations, diplomats in country missions to the UN in Geneva, government agencies, and any other interested persons.

26. The Bureau approved the Statistical Programme 2012 at its meeting in November 2011. The discussion at the meeting focused on new or substantially changed activities of the subprogramme and proposals for changes in Steering Groups and Task Forces.

IV. REPORTING

F. Programme Performance Report

27. The UNECE reports on the implementation of subprogrammes at the end of every biennium with a Programme Performance Report. The report assesses the progress towards the objective and expected accomplishments and explains lack of progress where applicable. The report contains information on the produced outputs compared to the plans and an overall statement of accomplishments supported by factual evidence, i.e. the indicators of achievement. The reporting also includes estimates of work-months used for each task.

28. This report is not submitted to the Bureau for approval. It is only disseminated through the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) within the UN secretariat, and each subprogramme may select the form of reporting to their governing body. IMDIS is updated every six months to reflect the actual outcomes achieved.

The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) also uses IMDIS for monitoring and auditing.

29. The Programme Performance Report is based on information in the Biennial Evaluation Report described in IV.G below which is submitted to the CES Bureau for approval.

G. Biennial Evaluation Report

30. The Biennial Evaluation Report assesses the performance of the subprogrammes at the UNECE level, in line with the Programme of Work. It includes data on indicators of achievement, and short text on accomplishments and lessons learned. The purpose of evaluation is to improve programme performance by promoting learning.

31. Other evaluations are also carried out, both internal and external. External evaluations are conducted most often by the OIOS which assists member countries and the UN in protecting its assets and in ensuring the compliance with resolutions, regulations, rules and policies, as well as the efficient and effective delivery of activities. Furthermore, after each biennium, the UNECE subprogrammes prepare a Self-Evaluation Report based on a common template and relying on evidence obtained through collecting information on the results of work. Each project carried out with the funding of the UN development account also includes an external evaluation at the end of the project.

32. **The Biennial Evaluation Report is submitted to the CES Bureau for approval at its meeting in February 2012** as the document number ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/20/Add.2.

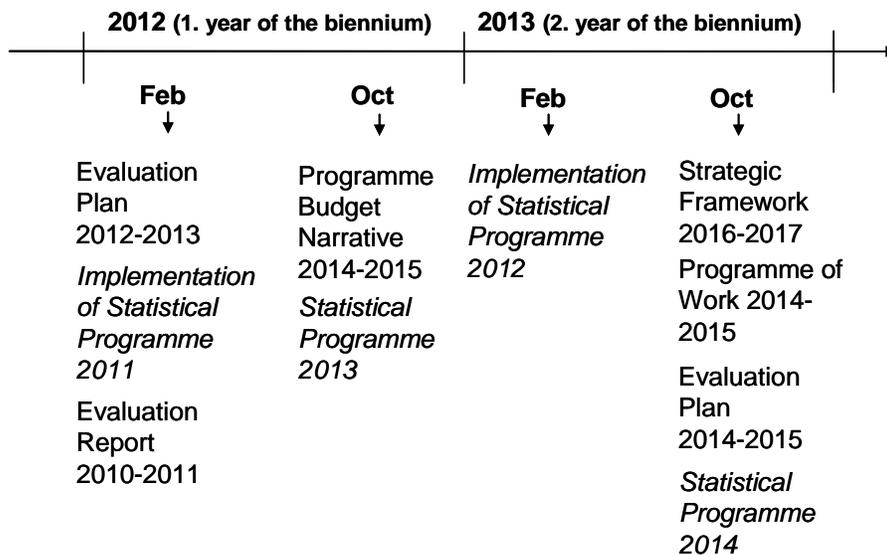
H. Implementation of the Annual Statistical Programme

33. The UNECE Statistical Division traditionally prepares an annual report for the CES Bureau on the implementation of the Statistical Programme. Different formats have been used in the past. To simplify the reporting and reuse information available in the IMDIS system, the report on the implementation of the 2011 Statistical Programme is based on information on outputs gathered for the Programme Performance Report (described in IV.F above).

34. **The report on the implementation of the Statistical Programme in 2011 is submitted to the Bureau for approval at its meeting in February 2012** as the document number ECE/CES/BUR/2012/FEB/20/Add.3.

V. TIMETABLE OF PLANNING AND REPORTING

35. The timetable of presenting the planning and reporting documents to the CES Bureau for approval is approximately the following:



36. The papers presented to the CES Bureau at its February meeting are mostly reports of the previous year or biennium, and those for the autumn meeting present plans for future work.

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