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STRENGTHENING THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

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1. First of all let me congratulate all of you on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Conference of European Statisticians and thank you for the opportunity to address such a high level forum.
2. As a representative from a country of the Commonwealth of Independent States, I would like to share my thoughts with you on the position and role of the Conference of European Statisticians, especially in the light of recent geopolitical changes.
3. In their paper, Mr. Fellegi and Franchet highlight in detail the activity of the Conference as an integrating and uniting body under the auspices of the United Nations. I would like to note that I agree with the thesis that today we need, first of all, to find out what is being done well and what areas might be improved, indeed significantly improved.
4. As a result of the collapse of the USSR, many countries have emerged in the world, particularly in the Eurasian continent. The main feature of these countries is their independence in implementing social and economic policy. We can say the same regarding issues of statistics organization and methodology.
5. In fact, so-called transition countries are now in different stages of economic and social development because of the disintegration processes that took place. I think that this circumstance requires adequate practices and methods of statistical work that correspond to generally accepted rules and standards. In this relation, the role and significance of our Conference increases considerably.

6. What is to be done here? First of all, the effectiveness of the Conference's work is to be further improved as an organ defining the policy and priorities in statistics for the short- and long-term future. In this regard, working groups set up and functioning under the aegis of the Statistical Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe jointly with Eurostat, OECD and other international organizations, might become an effective tool in implementing ideas and priorities developed by the Conference.

7. In this respect, I would like to make an important remark concerning the more active involvement of the Interstate Statistical Committee of CIS in the activities of the above-mentioned groups. We celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Committee this year. It would be useful to involve in the activity of these groups not only experts from the Statistical Committee of CIS, but also representatives from national statistical offices of CIS member countries.

8. With this in mind, the problem of meeting the demands of transition countries more effectively seems to me to be even more pressing. Undoubtedly, Eurostat, OECD and the Statistical Division of UN ECE have already begun to draw great attention to national statistical offices of CIS countries in strengthening methodological potential and institutional capacities. In this context, the Conference could become a coordinator and generator of ideas and priorities that are specific for these countries. Certainly, this must be implemented within the context of general strategy of Conference activity.

9. I would also like to share my ideas with you on what kind of issues could be priorities in the future activity of the Conference. Moreover, it is in line with the proposal of Messrs. Fellegi and Franchet concerning the plan of the Conference work with the agenda consisting of two modalities, with one covering issues specific to transition countries.

10. Firstly, the biggest problem for transition countries implementing social and economic reforms is poverty, which is one of the threats to national security of these countries. With technical and financial support from the World Bank, the system of statistical poverty monitoring was developed in Kyrgyzstan; it is a component part of the State Program "Comprehensive Development Framework of the Kyrgyz Republic to 2010" and "National Strategy of Poverty Reduction for 2001-2003". I believe that it might be an issue to be discussed by the Conference in the future.

11. Secondly, it is my strong conviction that an effective system of statistical poverty monitoring is an ideal tool with which to observe the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction level indicators. Our observations showed that implementation of such work is vital to develop effective social and economic policy. It seems to me that it would be very useful if the Conference take this problem into consideration and draw appropriate attention to it in future work.

12. Within this modality it would be reasonable to discuss matters related to international comparisons. Nowadays, OECD is efficiently working on this, but mainly inside the organization. The Interstate Statistical Committee of CIS is also dealing with this problem. Why

does the Conference not combine the efforts of several international statistical organizations to build an effective system of international comparisons?

13. There is another important direction that is worth the attention of the Conference, which is more or less connected with issues of international comparisons and poverty reduction problems. It is a set of issues connected with statistical evaluation of human development level and indicators, the so-called "human development index". This problem is actual and of interest to all countries. As you know, the Economic and Social Council of United Nations annually publishes the report "On Human Development", the aim of which is to attract worldwide attention to the progress in development of human potential and existing problems of inequality. I would like to note that problems of quality and reliability of human development indicators were reviewed at the 32nd Session of the UN Statistical Commission. Discussions held in that Session may lead to the conclusion that there are problems in this area and the solution to these problems depends on combined and coordinated measures taken, especially by statistical organizations. In my mind, the Conference could combine the efforts of international economic and statistical organizations and national statistical offices in this direction. Discussions on this matter could be organized within the 2nd module which is supposed to cover general and new issues.

14. Strengthening the role of the Bureau as a continuing body providing an integrated approach to solution of problems related to improvement of effectiveness of the Conference activities also seems to me to be important.

15. It is clear that the time allocated for the Plenary Sessions of the Conference is not sufficient to define possible priorities and directions of future work, especially during preliminary discussions. And that is why I fully agree with Messrs. Fellegi and Franchet when they say that there are risks of nonoccurrence of some priorities and conceptual issues that must be discussed by Heads of National Statistical Offices-members of the Conference.

16. I think that the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians should focus on the development and preparation of appropriate proposals on key and priority issues of statistical practice and methodological development. Undoubtedly, such preparatory work must be implemented with active participation of Heads of National Statistical Offices.

17. As well as this, I would like to note the positive role of the working groups during the preparation of appropriate issues to be discussed both in seminars, meetings and in the Conference. To my mind, it would be reasonable to set up several thematic sections on main directions of statistics under the auspices of the Bureau, for instance on macroeconomic statistics, social statistics, financial statistics and so on. The work of such sections could be organized on a continuous basis so that it would be possible to coordinate the activities of the working groups. Heads of these sections could be elected by the Conference. I am certain that it would help involve more national statistical offices as well as international and statistical organizations in the preparation of the discussions of the Conference.

18. An important issue that could considerably influence the effectiveness of the work of both the Conference and its Bureau is the strengthening of technological and communicational

capacities, taking into account the necessity of wider use of the capacities of Internet and web-sites of international organizations and national statistical offices of member countries of the Conference. The current web-site of the Conference and its Bureau must be modernized and used for virtual discussion of issues related to the forthcoming work of the Conference and its Bureau.

19. In conclusion, I would like to underline once again the importance of combined efforts oriented to improve the effectiveness of the Conference work and to express my hope that these efforts will facilitate the strengthening of the authority and the significance of the Conference of European Statisticians.