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**COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE REGION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE:
GENDER STATISTICS**

IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF GENDER STATISTICS

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The paper provides information on the outcome of the in-depth review of gender statistics carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in October 2007. The paper presents the reasons for selecting the topic for an in-depth review, important issues to be brought to the attention of the Conference, main points from the Bureau discussion and conclusions from the review. Furthermore, the paper provides information on the outcome of the Global Forum on Gender Statistics (December 2007). Information on international activities in gender statistics in 2008 extracted from the Database of International Statistical Activities is provided in Addendum 1.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) reviews each year 4-5 statistical areas in depth. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. The review focuses on strategic issues and highlights concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and a coordinating nature. The criteria for selecting a topic for a review are that (i) there are significant developments in that area, (ii) there are significant coordination issues, or (iii) there is a lack of activities at international level. The Bureau decided to inform the Conference about the outcome of the review at its plenary session.

2. The Bureau discussed gender statistics in October 2007 based on a paper prepared by Italy, and written comments by the following members of the Bureau: Australia, Brazil, Germany, Latvia, United States, the UNECE and the World Bank. The readers are encouraged to consult the Rapporteur Report by Italy and the written comments on Internet at: <http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2007.10.bureau.htm> (paper no. 3 and Add.1). Furthermore, information on international activities in gender statistics in 2008 is provided in an addendum to the present document (ECE/CES/2008/7/Add.1). Excerpt of the UNECE Database on International Statistical Activities.

II. REASONS FOR SELECTING THE TOPIC FOR AN IN-DEPTH REVIEW

3. The Bureau selected gender statistics for an in-depth review because a decrease in the level of attention given to gender statistics can be observed. Furthermore, no recommendations, standards or handbooks on gender-related issues have been recently published. At the same time, there is an increasing demand for gender relevant data both at international and country levels.

III. IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE BUREAU

4. A summary of the important issues identified in the paper by Italy are presented below:

(a) Gender statistics is facing new and important challenges which will involve the international community of statisticians, decision makers and users at all levels;

(b) Strong support should be given to re-launching gender statistics, it should occupy once more a central place at a high level in the strategies of official statistics;

(c) It is important to strengthen the role of official statistics in guiding the development of gender statistics;

(d) The strategic areas on which to focus attention are the following:

(i) Mainstreaming of gender in the entire national statistical system both at national and international levels. This includes the broadening of existing gender statistics programmes to areas that have been traditionally perceived as not gender-relevant,

such as economic statistics, business statistics, transport and agriculture. New efforts should be made to sensitize subject-matter statisticians who do not specifically work on gender on the benefits of producing better statistics by improving their gender-relevance;

(ii) Improving the availability and quality of gender statistics by high level managers at national and international levels. A sustainable gender statistics programme should be institutionalized and supported with regular resources. The commitment of high level managers is a key to its success in the long run. This is also true at international level where the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the CES should play a leading role in supporting gender statistics and re-launching global attention to this subject;

(iii) Development of regional and international standards in areas where the production and dissemination of information is particularly relevant for gender analysis. These areas relate for example to violence against women, gender attitudes, economic statistics (a field where the gender approach is more difficult to introduce), and other emerging topics. The standards should be developed within the framework of official statistics.

IV. THE BUREAU DISCUSSION ON INTERNATIONAL WORK ON GENDER STATISTICS

5. There was general support for the issues highlighted in the paper by Italy. The Bureau noted that many international activities are going on in gender statistics and experts are working actively in this area (e.g., the interagency expert group, the CES Steering Group and Task Forces, etc.).

6. During the discussion, the following points were made:

(a) There is a bias in the perception of some of the gender statistics activities which may be partially caused by the wording; users often do not understand the purpose of gender statistics and consider the subject exclusively as an advocacy tool for women; there is a need to find formulations that can express in an impartial way what gender statistics is trying to achieve;

(b) Gender statistics is not an end in itself but its aim is to improve the understanding and analysis of statistics broken down by gender;

(c) Talking about discrimination of women is a policy issue while official statistics should remain impartial.

V. CONCLUSIONS OF THE IN-DEPTH REVIEW

7. The Bureau agreed with the important issues highlighted by Italy and with the three strategic areas on which to focus.

8. The Bureau noted that the terminology used in gender statistics has to be carefully chosen in order to avoid the perception of being biased. It was recommended to discuss this question at the UNSC session in 2009.

9. The Bureau decided to inform the CES 2008 plenary session about the outcomes of the Global Forum on Gender Statistics (10-12 December 2007, Rome) (see below). The Bureau decided to review gender statistics again in 2-3 years' time.

VI. OUTCOME OF THE GLOBAL FORUM ON GENDER STATISTICS (DECEMBER 2007)

10. The Global Forum on Gender Statistics was held in Rome on 10-12 December 2007. It was organized jointly by Italy and the United Nations (the Statistics Division, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Population Fund, and the Economic Commission for Europe), in collaboration with the World Bank. The documents from the meeting are available at:

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/wshops/Gender_Statistics_10Dec07_Rome/default.htm.

11. The Global Forum was organised as part of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) Global Gender Statistics Programme to enhance the capacity of countries to collect, disseminate and use quality gender statistics. It was the first of a series of international meetings on gender statistics to be held annually with the purpose of promoting the advancement of gender statistics among decision makers and all other user groups.

12. The Forum officially launched the Global Gender Statistics Programme, the Interagency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics, and Gender Info, a new global database of gender statistics and indicators in selected areas of policy concern (available at: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/genderinfo/default.htm>).

13. The Forum reached the following conclusions:

(a) There is a clear need to engender data collection programmes. Population censuses are an important source of gender statistics and efforts are needed to improve the measurement of women's work, maternal mortality and other important indicators through censuses. In the area of engendering household surveys, it is important to improve the measurement of work in the informal sector, access to assets and resources, as well as health and poverty indicators. Continue work on time use surveys and improve vital statistics as a key source of data by sex;

(b) It is important to address key data gaps. There is a need to develop standards and tools for the measurement of gender-based violence as well as improve existing tools for the measurement of women's work, in particular in the informal economy, the reconciliation between work and family and quality of work, as well as women's access to assets. There is a need to develop methods for the measurement of women's and men's risk of poverty;

(c) International agencies should provide training to countries particularly in the following specific topics: gender-based violence, informal work, access to assets, and poverty. To ensure that training is continuous, it was recommended to institutionalize gender statistics training at the regional and/or sub-regional levels. UNSD and Sweden agreed to work together to issue the second version of Engendering Statistics as a United Nations publication;

(d) UNSD was called upon to continue efforts to improve data dissemination and access to information on gender statistics and other information by:

(i) Committing to continuous and regular updating of the gender statistics and indicators database;

(ii) Issuing Gender Info at regular intervals (one or two years);

(iii) Creating a website on gender statistics and other information, including the database and develop a portal at a later stage;

(iv) Producing the World's Women 2010;

(e) Capacity building programmes and initiatives to improve the financing for the development of statistics should also include a gender perspective. UNSD should also develop standards and guidelines through the formal intergovernmental process (UNSC) to ensure full involvement and commitment by national statistical systems and full mainstreaming of gender in the production and use of statistics.

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