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Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE STATISTICAL
PROGRAMME AND WORK OF THE CONFERENCE'S TEAMS OF SPECIALISTS:
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE STATISTICAL
PROGRAMME: REPORT ON 2007 AND PLANS FOR 2008**

REPORT OF THE 18-19 OCTOBER 2007 MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Note by the secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The second meeting of the 2007/2008 Bureau was held in Helsinki, Finland, on 18-19 October 2007 and was hosted by Statistics Finland. The following members of the Bureau attended: Heli Jeskanen-Sundström (Chairman), Brian Pink, Peter Hackl, Eduardo Pereira Nunes, Vladimir Sokolin, Aija Zigure, and Suzann Evinger representing Katherine K. Wallman. The following permanent participants also attended: Hervé Carré, Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat); Enrico Giovannini, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); Mikhail Korolev, Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT); Stefan Schweinfest representing Paul Cheung, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD); and Heinrich Brünnger, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Rob Edwards, International Monetary Fund (IMF) participated in the discussion on agenda item 7a via teleconference.

2. The following persons assisted members of the Bureau: Zelia Magalhaes Bianchini

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(Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística); Hilkkka Vihavainen and Antero Pohjola (Statistics Finland); Andrey Kosarev (Bureau of Economic Analysis, Russian Federation); Pieter Everaers and Hartmut Buchow (Eurostat); and Tiina Luige (UNECE). Jan Fischer (Czech Statistical Office) attended the meeting for agenda item six at the invitation of Heli Jeskanen-Sundström. Angela Me (UNECE) attended the meeting for agenda item 2b via teleconference. Lidia Bratanova of UNECE served as Secretary of the meeting.

II. IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF SELECTED STATISTICAL AREAS

3. The Bureau reviewed in-depth two statistical areas, namely statistics on income, living conditions and poverty; and gender and special population groups' statistics.

A. Statistics on income, living conditions and poverty (Statistical areas 1.5 and 3.3.1)

Documents: Informal documents, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/2 (OECD), Add.1 (World Bank), Add.2 (UNECE), Add.3 (United States), Add. 4 (Austria) and Add.5 (Brazil)

4. The Bureau reviewed in-depth the statistics on income, living conditions and poverty based on papers prepared by OECD and World Bank, and contributions by UNECE, United States, Austria and Brazil. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) There have been important improvements in this area, however, the evidence is still fragmented, there are no time series and no international database;

(b) The UNSD survey of current practices in countries shows very diverse approaches, a big problem is comparability between countries, as well as over time within countries; harmonisation could be achieved at best at a regional level for countries with comparable social conditions;

(c) The Luxembourg Income Study and the European Union (EU) Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) are important data sources; however, there is a need to train users on how to use these data, users need explanations in simple terms of what is measured and how the data can be used;

(d) The measurement of distribution of household wealth needs to be harmonised with national accounts (NA) data, there are big differences between the wealth measured in households and recorded in the NA;

(e) It would be useful to share good practices in this area and try to identify recommendations to statistical offices on a way forward;

(f) The United Nations has produced a handbook on poverty statistics that is currently being edited; Brazil has made a compendium of best practices in poverty measurement; the United States note (Add.3) shows concrete tools that statistical offices can put in place;

(g) It is difficult to harmonise the inputs, attempts can be made to try to harmonise the outputs, e.g. to identify a minimum set of tabulations to be provided by different countries;

(h) Income distribution as a topic is more relevant for developed countries, the developing countries are looking more at poverty in a traditional sense;

(i) This topic is of priority importance to the CIS countries;

(j) It is important to improve coordination between the EU and other countries;

(k) There is no clear focal point which can address these issues internationally;

(l) The work is often done in universities and there is not much experience available in national statistical offices (NSOs); for example, the European Central Bank (ECB) is planning a survey on household wealth but only a few NSOs are involved; statistical offices should not remain outside these discussions;

(m) There is a need for a road map of what can be done in practice, how to continue in this area and what kind of issues need to be discussed (the work has to be closely linked to policies); the actions should also involve other institutions active in the field; a small Task Force could be established at a later stage;

(n) United States would like to be involved if any group is set up to deal with these issues under the Conference of European Statisticians (CES);

(o) A social statistics group was created in OECD last year (it also involves users); this group could become a focal point, instead of creating another group; Russia and Brazil should be invited to participate;

(p) A revision of the Canberra group outcome could be considered;

(q) The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) seminar on social statistics on 22 February 2008 could provide an opportunity to discuss the topic.

5. The Bureau agreed that the way forward is to develop a road map of what kind of issues need to be considered and what practical actions can be undertaken, to be reviewed by the Bureau at its February 2008 meeting. Eurostat will contact Richard Barnabé (the Chair of the CES Task Force on emerging issues in social statistics) and see to what extent a discussion on this issue can fit in with the planned meeting of the Expert Meeting on Social Statistics to be held in advance of the UNSC in February in New York. (Action: Eurostat)

B. Gender and special population groups (Statistical Area 3.3.2)

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/3 (Italy) and Add.1

6. The Bureau made an in-depth review of gender statistics based on a paper prepared by Italy, and written comments by Australia, Brazil, Germany, Latvia, United States, UNECE and

the World Bank. The paper by Italy was considered rich in issues and a good basis for the review.

7. Many international activities are going on and experts are working actively in this area (the interagency expert group, CES Steering Group and Task Forces, etc.). The Global Forum on Gender Statistics (10-12 December 2007, Rome) is expected to launch a Global Gender Statistics Programme and a High Level Group on Gender Statistics. It will be a 3-year initiative driven by the UNSD, in close cooperation with other bodies of the United Nations and the World Bank, bringing together statisticians and users of gender statistics. The OECD plans to propose at the Rome Conference a pilot project to build a "Wiki-gender" for sharing data, policy analysis and analytical work in gender statistics (using the databases from UNECE, OECD development center and the World Economic Forum).

8. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) There is a bias in the perception of some of the 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 better express what gender statistics is trying to achieve in an impartial way;

(b) Gender issues are considered not for the sake of gender but to help increase understanding of many other relevant topics;

(c) Talking about discrimination of women is a policy issue while gender statistics should not be a policy issue;

(d) The issues that are focused on women only should be treated as such and not considered the same as gender statistics.

9. The Bureau decided to review gender statistics again in a 2-3 years time. The outcome of the Global Forum on Gender Statistics (10-12 December 2007, Rome) should be presented at the CES 2008 plenary session. (Action: UNECE)

C. Business statistics

10. The Bureau made an in-depth review of business statistics in February 2007. At the time, the Bureau noted that several groups dealing with business statistics exist and that it is too early to take major decisions for work in the area before the work of the UNSC Friends of the Chair group has provided some outcome. Meanwhile, the Bureau decided to set up a small task force to address pending issues in the field of business statistics.

11. The Bureau briefly discussed the follow-up. The Friends of the Chair group will report to the UNSC meeting in February 2008. The group is preparing a report and making an inventory of different initiatives that feed into business statistics. The report (in the form of an outline) should be available by the end of December. The document submitted to the UNSC will be of a more technical nature.

12. Eurostat and Canada will prepare the terms of reference for a small Task Force on business statistics to be considered at the Bureau February 2008 meeting, as planned. (Action: Canada, Eurostat)

III. PROGRESS OF WORK

A. Statistical dissemination and communication

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/4 (UNECE)

13. The Bureau reviewed the progress report and plans for future work of the Steering Group on statistical dissemination and communication. The following recommendations were made:

- (a) The group should deal only with communication and not with technical dissemination;
- (b) The recommendations on designing websites can become outdated very quickly due to changes in technology;
- (c) Invite media people to participate in the work to take into account the views of the user side;
- (d) Focus the work on the following topics:
 - (i) Communicating with the media;
 - (ii) Statistical literacy in relation to helping the media to understand official Statistics;
 - (iii) Client feedback;
 - (iv) Future of statistical publications (product and service mix various forms of web dissemination, physical products (paper, CD-ROM) and tailor-made statistical services);
- (e) Concentrate the agenda of the May 2008 meeting on fewer and better-focused topics, the agenda is currently too diverse.

14. The Bureau extended the mandate of the group until October 2009 subject to taking into account the above recommendations. The Bureau asked the Steering Group to present the agenda of the May 2008 meeting to the Bureau for comments before finalising it. (Action: Steering Group on statistical dissemination and communication.)

B. Gender statistics

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/5 (UNECE)

15. The Bureau reviewed the work of the Steering Group on Gender Statistics, and the Task Forces on Gender Sensitization Training for Statisticians and on Violence Against Women. The following comments were made in the discussion:

(a) The issue is not only violence against women but also violence in families (e.g. by parents, carers) and households;

(b) There is a danger that the work on these issues is considered to be biased; sometimes these groups are perceived to be a body of women working for women, there is no clear border between the advocacy work and impartial provision of data; such an image does not work in favour of the activities;

(c) The language/terminology has to be clarified in order to transfer the right message, terms like “engendering”, “gender sensitisation”, “gender focal point” do not say anything to people who are outside the circle of experts dealing with gender statistics;

(d) Many of the contested terms have their origin in official United Nations policy documents and declarations.

16. The need to clarify the terminology in the context of gender statistics is valid also for other international work in this area. It was recommended to discuss this question also at the United Nations Global Forum on Gender Statistics (10-12 December 2007, Rome). The issue can also be discussed at the United Nations Statistical Commission Seminar on New Developments in Social Statistics (22 February 2008) and at the United Nations Statistical Commission Session in 2009 (gender statistics is not on the 2008 UN SC agenda). The UNSC meeting could also provide an opportunity to involve the larger statistical community in the debate.

17. The Bureau postponed the adoption of the Terms of References (TORs) of the Steering Group on Gender Statistics, and the Task Forces on Gender Sensitization Training for Statisticians and on Violence Against Women. The Bureau asked the UNECE secretariat to communicate the comments to the Steering Group and Task Forces, and ask them to review the terminology and content of work. The groups will prepare new TORs to be considered at the CES Bureau meeting in February 2008. (Action: UNECE, Steering Group on Gender Statistics, Task Force on Gender Sensitisation Training and the Task Force on Violence Against Women). The terminology issue should also be considered at the Global Forum on Gender Statistics in Rome and the UNSC (Action: UNSD).

C. Victim surveys

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/6 (UNECE)

18. The Bureau reviewed the progress of work and future plans of the Task Force on Victim Surveys. The mandate of the group was extended until February 2009 to finalise the manual. The manual should be presented to the Bureau for a review in February 2009.

IV. UNECE STATISTICAL PROGRAMME FOR 2008

Documentation: ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/7 and Add.1 (UNECE)

19. The discussion of the 2008 Statistical Programme (SP) was focused on those activities that were new or substantially changed compared to the previous year's programme. The work of various Steering Groups and Task Forces was also reviewed under this agenda item since the work is related to the activities in the 2008 SP.

A. Monitoring the implementation of and contributing to development of principles for official statistics

20. The activity has been changed to reflect recent work, such as the UNECE contributions to the principles governing the work of international statistical organizations. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) The Eurostat Code of Practice (CoP) is used as a guide for monitoring the adherence to principles of official statistics also outside the EU, e.g. in CIS, Balkan and Mediterranean countries, South America and Africa; it is important to have a coordinated effort in this area;

(b) All the CIS countries have a statistical law that is based on a model law prepared by the CIS Statistical Committee, the law includes the fundamental principles; however, its implementation in these countries does not always depend on statisticians;

(c) The global assessments of statistical systems have a wider scope than the peer reviews on CoP, they should form a basis for a strategy to develop the countries' statistical systems and provide a road map for their improvement;

(d) The Eurostat Code of Practice has created a very important momentum, and UNECE could build an umbrella project to support this effort; it is an extremely important area where more resources should be involved in future.

21. The Bureau agreed with the text of the activity 1.3 and recommended looking for a possibility to put more resources into that activity in 2009. (Action: UNECE) Eurostat will prepare a short paper on the situation with peer reviews and global assessments for the February 2008 meeting of the Bureau (Action: Eurostat).

B. Consumer price indices

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/8 (UNECE)

22. The Bureau discussed the terms of reference for the Organising Committee (OC) on Consumer Price Indices (CPI). The TOR were approved.

23. In this relation, the issue of governance of the international groups (Teams of Specialists) was raised. The groups set up under the CES umbrella (like the OC on CPI) report to the CES and its Bureau. The Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics and the Ottawa Group

report to the UNSC. The city groups have been set up by countries to meet their immediate needs of discussing cutting edge issues and sharing experience in specific fields. Therefore, it is up to the statistical offices of countries to cancel the groups if they are no longer useful. The city groups formally report to the UNSC but it is difficult for the UNSC to exercise its power over the city groups. In contrast, the Intersecretariat Working Groups (ISWG) normally consist of international agencies and are agency driven. However, this division of labour is no longer very clear since in several ISWGs countries are also involved. This mixed governance structure often creates confusion and can lead to potential duplication.

C. Statistical metadata

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/9 (UNECE)

24. This is an activity that has been changed to reflect the Bureau decision in February 2007 to establish a Steering Group on Statistical Metadata. The following comments were made in the discussion:

- (a) The group is moving in the right direction;
- (b) There is an inconsistency in the paper between para 2 that states that the main goals of the work have been achieved through the first release of the Common Metadata Framework, and para 8 that asks for the ongoing maintenance of the Framework; the message should be clear that it is an ongoing work, the group has not achieved its main aim because it is a rolling aim;
- (c) The message that deliverables are very important should be strengthened in the TOR, outputs should be more concrete;
- (d) Part D of the metadata framework will be the most important one; the group should demonstrate its value more strongly;
- (e) Outreach of this work is extremely important, the fundamental importance of metadata should be communicated to the top management of statistical offices; properly organised metadata will help the statistical office to be much more effective, therefore investment in metadata should come from the top management;
- (f) Some time at the CES plenary session should be devoted to sending a strong message about the importance of metadata to the heads of statistical offices.

25. The Bureau asked the secretariat to communicate the comments from the discussion to the Steering Group. The Terms of Reference of the Steering Group on Statistical Metadata were approved subject to the comments above. The topic of metadata should be included in the agenda of the CES 2008 plenary session. (Action: UNECE)

D. Impact of globalisation on National Accounts

26. This activity is included in the SP as a separate activity for the first time. The Bureau was informed about the progress of work of the Joint UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Working Group on the

impact of globalisation on National Accounts and plans for the future. The next meeting of the Working Group will be merged with the UNECE/OECD/Eurostat Meeting on National Accounts (April 2008). It was recommended to involve in the work also countries outside the UNECE region like India, China, Brazil, etc. All these countries are invited to the meeting in April 2008.

E. Measurement of volunteer work

27. This activity is presented separately in the SP for the first time. Concern was raised about the coordination of this work with the Johns Hopkins University. The secretariat will clarify whether there is an overlap with a joint activity of Johns Hopkins and ILO. (Action: UNECE) (Note of clarification: The Johns Hopkins University is a member of the Task Force and fully involved in the work.)

F. Demographic projections and population statistics

28. This activity was supposed to be terminated in 2007 but the Bureau decided to continue it following a request by countries. The Bureau was informed about the outcome of the UNECE Work Session on Demographic Projections held on 10-12 October 2007 in Bucharest, Romania. The meeting decided to prepare a collection of documented practices on population projections, and to create a Task Force for this purpose. The Terms of Reference for the Task Force will be submitted to the Bureau in February 2008.

29. As no activities are planned for 2008 on population statistics (intercensal population estimates), the title of the activity 6.9 in the SP 2008 will be changed to "Demographic projections". The secretariat will consider in 2009 possible activities on population statistics to follow up on the recommendation of the Bureau (in February 2007) to do some work on intercensal population estimates. (Action: UNECE)

G. Other issues related to the Statistical Programme

30. The Bureau asked for clarification about the statistical activities carried out by other UNECE Divisions, in particular about the resources, institutional setup, using the data from other international organizations' databases, etc. Until now, the UNECE Statistical Division has followed the data work in other UNECE divisions but not their methodological work. The Statistical Division will pay more attention to the methodological work in statistics carried out in other divisions in future. (Action: UNECE)

31. Housing statistics is a potential topic for an in-depth review by the Bureau because there are very few international activities in this area. (Action: UNECE)

32. The list of meetings in the SP 2008 will be updated and dates checked. (Action: UNECE)

33. The technical assistance activities to the CIS countries should be coordinated with the Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS and adopted by the Council of Heads of statistical services of the CIS countries. The CIS Statistical Committee will invite the UNECE to discuss these activities in Moscow in the end of November – beginning of December 2007. (Action: CIS-STAT)

34. The Bureau recommended the strengthening of the UNECE role as a bridge between the EU-OECD and the other countries of the region. How to improve the balance between the involvement of Eurostat, OECD and UNECE is a strategic issue that requires analysis of where the needs of countries could be best addressed and the resources most efficiently used. The Bureau will consider the division of labour and the bridging role of the UNECE in October 2008 (Action: UNECE).

35. The UNECE Statistical Division has recently doubled its technical cooperation activities thanks to attracting extrabudgetary sources. However, it would be very difficult to increase the technical cooperation activities further as the time that the regular staff can devote to organising these activities is limited.

36. The Bureau approved the 2008 UNECE Statistical Programme. The CES Bureau was encouraged to brief their country delegations to the UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM) meeting on 30 November 2007 about the UNECE SP 2008 and on the technical assistance activities funded from extrabudgetary sources. (Action: Bureau members) The UNECE will send a letter to the national statistical offices of UNECE member countries with the same request. (Action: UNECE)

V. UNECE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2010-2011

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/10 Rev.1 (UNECE)

37. The Bureau considered the strategic framework for the 2010-2011 biennium and made suggestions on how to enhance the indicators of achievement. The Bureau approved the strategic framework and clustering of activities. The UNECE secretariat will consider improving the indicators of achievement. (Action: UNECE)

VI. PLANS FOR THE FORUM ON HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND TRAINING TO BE ORGANISED IN 2008

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/11 (Czech Republic and Canada)

38. The Bureau discussed the plans for the forum on Human Resources Management and Training to be organised in 2008. The following points were made in the discussion:

- (a) It was recommended to call it a meeting of experts;
- (b) The target audience are heads of human resources rather than heads of offices;
- (c) The papers that were presented in the 2006 CES plenary session may be a good source for the meeting;
- (d) The peer reviews of statistical offices are a good source of information on the human resources management practices in statistical offices;

(e) For session 1, the first priority is how to find the right people for the right positions: what kind of competencies are required from an official statistician of the 21st century, which are the core competencies and what kind of mix of competencies makes an effective statistical office (e.g. involving journalists, artists, researchers, etc.);

(f) To extend session 1 to consider what are the typical job descriptions, this could be easily done through supporting papers, e.g. to ask offices to collect the job descriptions currently used;

(g) Identification of core competencies would also help to identify the training needs and design the training programs;

(h) Another burning issue is how to make the statistical offices more attractive as employers on the labour market to appeal to qualified staff, it would be good to exchange experience on how offices are recruiting, promoting the statistical office as an interesting place to work, etc.;

(i) Developing new ways of organising the work may also help to attract people (e.g. part-time work, working from home, operating in separate sites that may provide a better/cheaper living environment, developing virtual teams, combining different skills, etc.);

(j) Session 2 could be included in session 3, or reduced;

(k) An important topic is people retiring: how to organise the mentoring and to retain an institutional memory when losing senior people, the distortion of age structure in the office, how to attract youngsters, etc.;

(l) Some offices could be asked to test the ideas that are generated at the meeting;

(m) It was suggested to consider the use of the “CES model” for the meeting, that is, to ask discussants to summarise the papers and raise questions to authors of invited papers and for the general discussion, then give an opportunity to authors to reply to questions and comment on the discussant’s summary.

39. The possible dates of the meeting were discussed as it is potentially too close to the Eurostat meeting of Directors General of the National Statistical Institutes (DGINS). However, it was decided to organise the forum during the 1st half of September as planned, as the following months would coincide with other meetings.

40. Eurostat volunteered to be a member of the Organising Committee. The EU candidate countries would also like to be actively involved in the organization of the forum.

41. It was decided to extend and reshape session 1 according to suggestions mentioned above, and to merge sessions 2 and 3. The heads of offices should be involved in the meeting because human resources management is one of their responsibilities. Therefore, some heads of offices will participate in the panel discussion.

42. The meeting should be a place for exchange of experience for all countries regardless of their level of development. The question was raised of organising a translation into Russian and whether it would be possible to support the participation of human resources managers from the CIS countries.

43. The Organising Committee will prepare a brief paper identifying the issues that should be considered at the different sessions to help the authors prepare the papers and focus the discussion. The Bureau will consider the paper at its February 2008 meeting. (Action: OC on human resources management and training)

VII. PREPARATIONS FOR THE CES SEMINARS IN 2008

A. Outline for the first seminar: "Measuring population movement and integration in a globalized world"

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/12 (Germany)

44. The Bureau reviewed the preparation for this seminar on the basis of a draft outline prepared by Germany. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) It was recommended to look at the papers of the International Association of Official Statistics (IAOS) 2006 conference and the last DGINS meeting to find other potential authors;

(b) It was suggested that input could be obtained from the UNECE Steering Group on Migration Statistics and the Task Force on Measuring Emigration to better focus the seminar and identify possible organizers and discussants, as well as authors;

(c) It was also suggested that the seminar should focus on statistical and data quality issues rather than on research and policy issues;

(d) The CES seminar should not aim to find a common definition of migrants during the meeting;

(e) The content of session 1 is not sufficiently clear, it depends on whether the CES Task Force on migration statistics will have anything to present by June 2008;

(f) It was suggested to merge sessions 1 and 4 (using the second option);

(g) The title of the seminar refers to integration, if the first option in session 4 is dropped, there is a discrepancy because no session will deal with integration.

45. Canada offered a paper on how to measure successful integration (for session 4). The seminar organisers are expected to find the Session Organisers and Discussants.

46. The Bureau will discuss the revised outline of the seminar in February 2008. (Action: Germany and Eurostat)

B. Outline for the second seminar: “Strategic issues linked to the measurement of international transactions”

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/13 (IMF and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis)

47. The Bureau reviewed the preparation for this seminar on the basis of a draft outline prepared by the IMF and the United States Bureau of Economic Analysis. The following points were made in the discussion:

(a) Some concern was expressed on the structure of the seminar, the points raised in the proposed outline are relevant but the discussion risks becoming too technical;

(b) It is crucial that chief statisticians are confronted with this issue because doubts in statistics on international transactions are a threat to the credibility of economic statistics in general;

(c) It is difficult to have an integrated discussion with people outside statistics and statisticians at this kind of meetings, the discussion should focus on how statisticians are addressing these issues;

(d) The 1st session risks becoming completely independent from the others, some concrete recommendations for statistical offices should be built in showing what can be done with already available data;

(e) Session 2 covers four different issues that are difficult to measure, this session could be split into 2 sub-sessions to better focus the discussion; furthermore, session 2 could be expanded to include the asymmetry issue;

(f) Too many invited papers are planned, it would be very difficult to handle all the different issues from the papers (even though they are not individually presented), also the Discussants' presentations will become too long;

(g) A number of papers refer to ongoing activities (revision of Balance of Payments (BOP) etc.) which will not be attractive for chief statisticians if the papers just report on what is going on;

(h) There may be opportunities to draw on the work of the tax commissioners, a paper could be proposed from a country where there are interesting issues in this area;

(i) OECD can distribute some interesting papers that were prepared for the recent OECD international trade meeting;

(j) Instead of having a paper from Hong Kong, it would be better to have a paper from Germany or other countries, it is desirable to have papers also from non-OECD countries (e.g. Russia);

(k) Statistics Canada offered a paper to the seminar;

(l) It would be good to distribute the Discussants' questions beforehand allowing participants to know in advance what can be expected from the seminar.

48. When inviting papers, the Seminar Organisers should give specific directions to the authors to bear the chief statisticians in mind as the target audience. It is important to brief the authors, explain how the topic is considered at the CES and to avoid technical detail. The Seminar Organisers should contact authors as soon as possible. The deadline for invited papers is 15 March 2008 to ensure the translation. The papers should be circulated in advance with a list of possible issues for discussion.

49. The duration of the seminar will be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a day. However, the discussion on the sustainable development report will be shortened allowing an extra 20 minutes for the seminar.

50. The Seminar Organisers will prepare an updated outline to be considered at the February 2008 meeting of the Bureau. (Action: Seminar Organisers)

C. Preparation of the formal session of the CES, draft agenda

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/14 (UNECE)

51. The Bureau considered the organization of the CES plenary session in 2008.

52. The CES 2008 plenary session will take place on 10 June (p.m.) -12 June (after the OECD Statistics Committee meeting). It will be held in the OECD conference center in the recently renovated headquarters of the OECD. The Conference facilities allow the possibility to provide webcasting, which may be considered.

53. The following topics are planned to be dealt with under the formal business:

(a) Report on measuring sustainable development;

(b) Business statistics;

(c) In-depth review of selected statistical areas (the topics will be decided in February 2008):

(i) income, living conditions and poverty;

(ii) Gender and special population groups, including outcome of the Rome meeting;

(iii) Culture statistics;

(iv) Environment statistics;

(d) Statistical metadata.

Information items:

- (a) Impact of globalisation on National Accounts;
- (b) Report of the Task Force on electronic data reporting;
- (c) Report of the Task Force on confidentiality and privacy aspects of statistical data integration;
- (d) Information on the organization of the forum on human resources management and training in 2008.

54. The more detailed organization of the formal business part of the Conference will be decided in February 2008. The Bureau will consider how to handle the progress reports when there is no time for discussion at the plenary session. OECD will clarify the working hours of the Conference (whether it is possible to hold sessions of 3.5 hours or to finish at 18:00).

55. The Bureau decided that only a short report reflecting the topics discussed and the decisions taken will be prepared during the plenary session. The report will be adopted at the end of the meeting. A longer report summarising the discussions will be prepared after the meeting as an Annex to the report, in English only.

VIII. PRESENTATION OF THE STATISTICAL ACTIVITIES OF OECD

56. The OECD presented its statistical activities. The staff of the OECD Statistics Directorate (STD) consists of about 70 people. In addition, about 70-80 statisticians are working in other OECD Directorates. The STD budget is about 5 million Euros including the staff costs. Voluntary contributions from countries add to about 0.5 million Euros per year which is significantly less than in other Directorates. National statistical offices could be more proactive in finding money in other parts of government that could be used for supporting the statistical activities.

57. The OECD statistics are well perceived. This is due to the high quality of output and the fact that statistical data are considered relevant and independent from influence of governments and policies. The statistical publications produce an income of about 4.5 million Euros per year but this does not contribute to the budget of the Statistics Directorate.

58. One of the main challenges for the OECD statistics is to implement the role of OECD as a hub for discussion on global issues vis-à-vis the EU, non-OECD countries, new emerging countries and the UNSC. The bridging function between the EU and non-EU countries works well and is part of the daily work culture.

59. In this connection, the Bureau discussed how to globally adopt standards that are developed by different organizations, in different regions and often at a different speed. For example, Eurostat reacts to politically driven requests from the parliament and council and therefore has to follow its own speed in developing laws and standards. However, it is in the interest of countries that the standards should be developed within the same timeframe and the

developing countries would be involved in the process as early as possible. It is the responsibility of the community of international agencies and of member countries who are concerned to find a solution to this problem at the United Nations level.

IX. AGENDA FOR THE UN STATISTICAL COMMISSION SESSION IN FEBRUARY 2008

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/17 (UNSD)

60. UNSD informed the Bureau about the provisional agenda of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2008. The UNSC session will take place on 26-29 February 2008. In addition, several side events are organised:

- (a) A seminar on new developments on social statistics (22 February 2008);
- (b) High level discussion forum “Relevance, integrity, innovation – are statistics measuring up”, including chairpersons of statistical councils or commissions (25 February afternoon);
- (c) Lunch event on recent good experiences in censuses (27 February);
- (d) Seminar on the use of administrative data sources (28 February).

X. EVALUATION OF THE 55TH CES PLENARY SESSION

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/15 (UNECE)

61. The results of the evaluation questionnaires of the 2007 CES plenary session were presented for information. The replies show that when the seminar is too technical, its usefulness to the participants is compromised. This message has to be communicated to the organisers of the future CES seminars. Furthermore, the Discussants have to be the heads of offices in order to guarantee that the issues are considered from the perspective of the top management of NSOs. The document on recommendations for organising the CES seminars will be updated to reflect these findings. (Action: UNECE)

62. The Discussants' slides should be distributed in advance allowing participants to think about the issues before the seminars and be better prepared for the discussion. (Action: Seminar Organisers)

XI. FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE BUREAU

Documents: Informal document, ECE/CES/BUR/2007/OCT/16 (UNECE)

63. A note on follow-up to decisions taken by the Bureau and the Conference was presented for information.

64. The Bureau considered possible follow-up to the seminar on efficiency and effectiveness of statistical offices held in 2007. The Conference concluded that the discussion on this topic should continue in future with the aim of collecting and sharing best practices in the field of measuring effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. Latvia volunteered to collect from different countries the indicators and practices of reporting the output of statistical offices, and prepare a paper for the February 2008 meeting. (Action: Latvia)

65. Concerning culture statistics, Eurostat is revitalising the work. A publication will be prepared in 2007 and a Working Group re-launched in 2008. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics has also launched a new project on culture statistics. The Bureau will review culture statistics in-depth in February 2008.

66. Concerning the measurement of health status, the Bureau was informed that the World Health Organization (WHO) would like to withdraw from the Budapest initiative. The Chair of the Task Force is working very hard to keep WHO in the group.

XII. DATES AND VENUE OF THE NEXT CES AND BUREAU MEETINGS

67. The next meeting of the Bureau will take place on 12-13 February 2008 in Geneva.

68. The October 2008 meeting will take place on 20-21 October 2008 in Washington, D.C., and will be hosted by the World Bank.

69. The Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística invited the Bureau to hold one of its future October meetings in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Eurostat also invited the Bureau to hold one of its future February meetings in Luxembourg.

XIII. OTHER BUSINESS

70. All papers from the meeting will be posted on the web, except the ones that will be revised (e.g. the terms of reference that were not approved).

71. Eurostat will circulate to the Bureau the electronic version of its inventory of working groups. Any corrections should be sent to Pieter Everaers (pieter.everaers@ec.europa.eu). The inventory will be updated and discussed at the February 2008 meeting. Eurostat will think how to structure the discussion and what questions should be considered. (Action: Eurostat)

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