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Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-sixth plenary session
Geneva, 18-20 June 2018

Report of the sixty-sixth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

Contents

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I. Introduction

A. Attendance

1.   The Conference of European Statisticians (CES) held its sixty-sixth plenary session in Geneva, from 18 June to 20 June 2018. It was attended by representatives from Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

2.   The Conference was attended by representatives of the Eurasian Economic Commission, European Central Bank (ECB), European Commission (Eurostat), European Free Trade Association (EFTA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

3.   United Nations University – Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT) was also represented.

B. Agenda and procedure

4.   The provisional agenda (ECE/CES/94) was adopted.

C. Opening statement

5.   Ms. M. Bruun, the Chair of CES, chaired the plenary session. She opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

II. Matters arising from the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/1

6.   The Conference reaffirmed the decisions of the 49th UNSC session that have implications for its work, as presented in document ECE/CES/2018/1, including the work on statistics for SDGs, migration and refugee statistics, national accounts, environmental-economic accounting, climate-change related statistics, and extreme events and disasters.

III. Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics

A. Introduction

7.   Poland organized the seminar in collaboration with Israel, New Zealand and Slovakia. Mr. D. Rozkrut (Poland) opened and chaired the seminar. He noted that there is increasing interest in measuring new, challenging topics and broadening the scope of official statistics to stay relevant now and in the future.

8.   Mr. A. Arundel, of the United Nations University, Maastricht, gave an opening keynote presentation. He highlighted the challenges for national statistical organisations from the perspective of a data user, and stressed the importance of broadening official statistics to cover emerging topics, as well as deepening them to provide more detail for users. He highlighted the importance of "big data" through the example of statistics on innovation.

B. Session 1: Emerging topics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/31, 33

9.   Mr. Y. Finkel (Israel) chaired the session. It was based on papers from France and Slovakia, as well as a contribution from Israel. Mr. Finkel noted five issues related to broadening of official statistics: (i) new topics and subject areas; (ii) use of administrative data to its full potential; (iii) need for advanced statistical methods and technology when using multiple data sources; (iv) how to reconcile the increasing protection of privacy and the need for more detailed data; and (v) administrative and legal issues related to national statistical offices' (NSOs) role as a coordinator of a national statistical system, and possible public-private partnerships for the use of big data.

10.   Mr. K. Pesendorfer (Austria) gave a keynote presentation. He highlighted the strong growth in interest in official statistics and the changing role of national statistical organisations to serve a wider range of stakeholders. This requires more pro-active interactions with user groups, new partnerships, and a more agile approach to product development that lead statistical organisations towards becoming data science enterprises.

11.   The following issues were raised in the discussion:

        (a)   Good relationships with stakeholders are vital for identifying new topics. Anticipating emerging data needs is challenging. Keeping a close eye on the developments in policy and business communities and civil society can help;

        (b)   Partnerships are important to develop new capabilities. Statistical organisations should showcase better what they can offer to potential partners, and demonstrate leadership in their areas of strength based on extensive experience, strict principles and quality criteria;

        (c)   Ensuring relevance equals survival for national statistical organisations. The need for greater flexibility should be reflected in organisational structures and new capabilities have to be developed;

        (d)   Better access to data, particularly at the sub-national level, is essential to meet new requirements;

        (e)   Geocoding greatly facilitates the integration of data from different sources to produce new outputs;

(f)   Work on emerging topics can often benefit from international guidelines. Preparation of guidelines takes time, therefore a mechanism to identify future priorities is needed.

C.   Session 2: How to react swiftly

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/20, 21, 28, 32, 37

12.   Ms. L. MacPherson (New Zealand) chaired the session. It was based on papers from Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, United States and Eurostat.

13.   Mr. J. Pullinger (United Kingdom) gave a keynote presentation. He highlighted the need for official statistics to help people make better decisions, and to move from being a production organization to a service organization. He outlined the five key points of the strategy of the UK Office for National Statistics, namely to be helpful to decision makers, professional, innovative, efficient and capable. He stressed the importance of leadership and accountability throughout the organization.

14.   Slovakia presented the results of a survey of Conference participants on the "hottest" emerging topics. Statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), trends in demography, social exclusion and innovation strategies were the top responses, with policy-makers and researchers seen as the main recipients of new statistics in these areas.

15.   Participants discussed the issues raised in small groups. Key points and questions were posted on a Slido site for the Conference. These were used to inform a panel discussion, with further questions being added and voted up or down by delegates. The following issues were discussed:

(a)   It is important to promote the brand of official statistics, and highlight successes;

(b)   Organizational culture should change to support greater experimentation and innovation;

(c)   The label "experimental statistics" can be helpful when developing new products;

(d)   Partnerships are very useful, particularly when they are focused on solving common problems;

(e)   International organiZations can play a role in facilitating partnerships between statistical organisations and multi-national businesses;

(f)   New capabilities are needed, particularly in the areas of data science and data literacy. These capabilities can be obtained through recruitment or by developing existing staff.

16.   In his concluding remarks, the seminar Chair, Mr. Rozkrut, highlighted the following:

(a)   Chief Statisticians should take the responsibility for the statistical policy, including for the products and services that NSOs deliver and the areas covered by official statistics. Leadership is important, within the institution and in international cooperation and harmonization;

(b)   Official statistics should be both broadened to measure what matters and made deeper to improve the ways how it is measured and provide more detail. A culture of continuous change is needed. At the same time, statistical offices should be pragmatic and deliver results.

1. Action taken by the Conference

17.   The Conference recognized the challenges that statistical offices face in view of a growing interest in measuring areas that are new to official statistics or are difficult to measure. These challenges include the need for cultural change to increase flexibility, and to develop closer relationships with stakeholders to better anticipate their needs. Strategic partnerships, effective leadership and development of new capabilities amongst staff are key to meeting these challenges.

18.   The Conference identified the following possible actions for the way forward:

(a)   Prepare interactive electronic guidelines on measuring what matters, including:

i.   Suggested approaches to new emerging topics;

ii. How to foresee which topics will be important;

iii. How to identify stakeholders' needs and keep track of their changing needs;

iv. How to react quickly and to identify and acquire the data needed for new topics/areas;

v.   How to integrate new statistics with regular statistical production.

(b)   Consider how any future work on this topic should be integrated with related work under CES, including on strategic partnerships and modernisation of official statistics.

19.   The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised during the seminar. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions.

IV. Reports, guidelines and recommendations prepared under the umbrella of the Conference

A. Leading, composite and sentiment indicators, interim report

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/7, 7/Add.1

20.   The Conference reviewed the interim *Guidelines on producing leading, composite and sentiment indicators* developed by a Task Force chaired by Denmark. Prior to the CES plenary session, the Secretariat conducted an electronic consultation on the Guidelines with all CES members.

21.   The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a)   There is an increasing need for leading, composite and sentiment indicators that allow to get an up-to-date picture of the economy, including indicators that can serve as early warning signals. There is also a growing need for social indicators to go beyond GDP in measuring progress.

(b)   More work in future may be needed on communication of these indicators.

1. Action taken by the Conference

22.   The Conference expressed support for the draft *Guidelines on producing leading, composite and sentiment indicators*. The Conference underlined the growing importance and interest in leading, composite and sentiment indicators as ways to provide timely

information about economic and social development, and noted that the Guidelines should address issues related to international comparability and disaggregation of indicators. The Conference agreed on the proposed time plan and asked the Task Force to take into account the comments received during the electronic consultation (ECE/CES/2018/7/Add.1) and at the CES plenary session in finalizing the Guidelines.

B. Data integration for measuring migration

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/2, 2/Add.1

23. The Conference reviewed the *Guidance on data integration for measuring migration*, developed by a Task Force chaired by Spain. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) The Guidance is a useful tool, acknowledging that the provided suggestions are not binding and that countries' practices vary significantly.

(b) Further work is still required to improve the availability, quality and comparability of migration statistics.

1. Action taken by the Conference

24. The Conference endorsed the *Guidance on data integration for measuring migration*, subject to the amendments presented in ECE/CES/2018/2/Add.1. The Conference stressed the need to continue working on migration statistics, and asked the joint UNECE/Eurostat Work Sessions to follow up on issues suggested in the Guidance and the comments made by the Conference.

C. Measuring international labour mobility

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/3, 3/Add.1

25. The Conference reviewed the report *Measuring international labour mobility* developed by a Task Force chaired by Israel. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) For many countries, it will be difficult to achieve the improvements recommended in the report, especially on covering illegal migration. In implementing the recommendations, it will be important to maintain the distinction between refugees and people who move for other reasons.

(b) Exchange of data among countries and use of mirror statistics from destination countries are very important for improving statistics on labour mobility.

1. Action taken by the Conference

26. The Conference endorsed *Measuring international labour mobility*, subject to the amendments presented in document ECE/CES/2018/3/Add.1. The Conference emphasized the importance as well as the complexity of the topic, where further work may be needed.

D. Use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/4/Rev.1, 4/Add.1

27. The Conference reviewed the *Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses*, developed by a Task Force chaired by the Netherlands. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) For future censuses beyond the 2020 round, it will be necessary to discuss the concept and definition of the population to be enumerated in the light of important changes in data sources and methodology. The UNECE Steering Group on Censuses will discuss the definition of population in the context of an analysis of future censuses beyond 2020;

(b) More guidance is needed on measuring the quality of data from registers and administrative sources; a new UNECE task force has been set up to work in this area.

1. Action taken by the Conference

28. The Conference endorsed the *Guidelines on the use of registers and administrative data for population and housing censuses* (ECE/CES/2018/4/Rev.1) subject to the comments made and the amendment suggestion made by Germany.

E. Common elements of statistical legislation

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/6, 6/Add.1

29. The Conference reviewed the *Guidance on common elements of statistical legislation* developed by a Task Force co-chaired by Latvia and United Kingdom.

30. In the electronic consultation on the Guidance prior to the CES plenary session, Australia suggested changing the title of the Guidance since it presents much more than common elements of statistical legislation. The Task Force proposed to change the title of the document to *Guidance on modernising statistical legislation*.

1. Action taken by the Conference

31. The Conference endorsed the *Guidance on common elements of statistical legislation* developed by a dedicated Task Force, subject to the amendments presented in document ECE/CES/2018/6/Add.1. The Conference supported changing the title to *Guidance on modernising statistical legislation*, which better reflects the nature of the document.

32. The Conference supported the proposals for further work including reviewing the Guidance in five years as proposed by the Task Force, and asked the CES Bureau to decide on the next steps.

F. Entrepreneurship statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/5, 5/Add.1

33. The Conference reviewed the *Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics* developed by a Task Force chaired by Canada.

1. Action taken by the Conference

34. The Conference endorsed the *Guidelines on the use of statistical business registers for business demography and entrepreneurship statistics*, subject to the amendments presented in document ECE/CES/2018/5/Add.1.

35.   The Conference encouraged the joint UNECE/Eurostat/OECD Expert Group on Business Registers to address the topics proposed for further work and research in Chapter 7 of the Guidelines.

G.   Exchange and sharing of economic data

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/8

36.   The Conference discussed exchange and sharing of economic data based on an interim report by a dedicated Task Force (chaired by Finland). The following issues were raised in the discussion:

     (a)   Finding solutions to make possible the exchange and sharing of data for statistical purposes is extremely important to keep economic statistics up-to-date and relevant;

     (b)   An iterative approach in small steps was supported. At the same time, those steps should be done quickly. Data exchange between countries bilaterally or within small groups is often a good practical step. It is not always necessary to exchange huge microdata sets, the exchange of qualitative information may be also helpful. A reliable legal framework is an important precondition for data exchange;

     (c)   Data exchange can be beneficial also to multinational enterprises (MNEs) and open up a good partnership opportunity. It can reduce response burden, and the resulting statistics can provide MNEs with insights about markets, supply chains, etc. It is very important to communicate this to the enterprises;

     (d)   Role of international organizations is essential by offering a platform for this work.

1.   Action taken by the Conference

37.   The Conference welcomed the interim report of the Task Force on exchange and sharing of economic data and expressed support for the work.

38.   The Conference supported the proposal to create an international network of experts on multinational enterprise groups and recognized the need for a regular international forum building on the joint UNECE, Eurostat and OECD Group of Experts on National Accounts. These meetings should regularly discuss issues related to the data of multinational enterprise groups and the sharing of economic data for statistical purposes.

39.   The Conference recommended that the work should continue in small steps, paying attention to issues related to confidentiality, communication and legislation to support data sharing for statistical purposes. The first step should be to look into the opportunities to exchange data for statistical purposes within current statistical laws.

40.   The Conference asked the Task Force to take into account the comments and input provided by the 2018 CES plenary session in the further work.

V.   Collaboration with United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management: Europe on geospatial data and statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/13

41.   The Conference considered a proposal on deepening the collaboration between the UNECE and United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management: Europe (UN-GGIM: Europe). The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a)   Deepening the collaboration is necessary as the worlds of official statistics and geospatial data are converging. A closer collaboration is already taking place in other regions, for example in the ECLAC region;

(b)   The geospatial dimension should be more present in UNECE work on modernising official statistics, including the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM);

(c)   Linkages between statistical and geospatial information are particularly relevant in the work on population and housing censuses, as well as land-use statistics;

(d)   The integration of statistical and geospatial information will be further highlighted in the 2018 Conference of the European Forum for Geography and Statistics, to be hosted by Finland in October.

A.   Action taken by the Conference

42.   The Conference approved the proposal for deepening the collaboration between UNECE and UN-GGIM: Europe, presented in document ECE/CES/2018/13.

43.   The Conference agreed to hold a common session of a day or half a day of CES and UN-GGIM: Europe in 2020. UNECE will also host the plenary session of UN-GGIM: Europe back to back with the Conference in 2020.

VI.   Work of the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/12, 12/Add.1

44.   Mr. A. Arora (Canada), Chair of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics (HLG-MOS) presented the annual report of the Group including its main achievements and priorities for 2018. He also shared the new vision and strategy of the group.

45.   The following points were raised during the discussion:

(a)   The HLG-MOS models are used in many statistical organisations. In particular, GSBPM has shown to be useful for restructuring organisations and facilitating exchange of good practices.

(b)   HLG-MOS demonstrates the benefits of international collaboration. Countries who participated in the activities remarked that any organisation, regardless of the size, could contribute to and benefit from the modernisation work, and encouraged other countries to join the community.

(c)   The new vision and strategy of HLG-MOS capture the essence of challenges that statistical organisations face and provide a roadmap to overcome these.

A. Action taken by the Conference

46. The Conference approved the annual report of the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics, including the outcomes of the activities carried out in 2017 and plans for the rest of 2018 (ECE/CES/2018/12).

47. The Conference strongly supported the continuation of the work on modernization of official statistics. National and international statistical organizations were invited to support the HLG-MOS work programme and to become partners in the Statistical Modernization Community.

48. The Conference endorsed the new vision of the Group (ECE/CES/2018/12/Add.1) to respond to the needs of national statistical offices in a timely and effective manner.

VII. Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

A. Introduction

49. Albania organized the seminar in collaboration with Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands and UNECE. Ms. D. Ibrahimaj (Albania) opened and chaired the seminar. She emphasised the need to modernise statistical communications, including modernising the image of official statistics and its products and services. She underlined the need to think strategically not to get lost in the different possibilities for innovation.

B. Session I: Strategic communications

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/24, 25, 27, 29, 30

50. Mr. J. Santaella (Mexico) and Ms. J. Markovic (Montenegro) chaired the session. It was based on papers by Belgium, Croatia, Norway, Eurostat and OECD.

51. The session began with three interactive voting questions that the participants could reply on the spot. The answers showed that over 70% of the respondents had a clearly defined and documented communication strategy, and 60% of respondents were of the opinion that the brand of a statistical organisation should strike a balance between friendly and serious. Additionally, most respondents found that staff outside the communication and dissemination units should receive training in communications.

52. Mr. M. Ackermans (the Netherlands) made a keynote presentation providing examples and best practice from recent successful communication activities in the Netherlands.

53. The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a) Communication is one of the most important strategic challenges for statistical offices. It is wider than delivering a message to users. Communication strategy has to be aligned with the organisation's general strategy, and be part of modernising the statistical office. Internal communication is very important for this purpose;

(b) A fundamental shift is taking place to think about communication from the design stage of new initiatives and products, and not as just the last step in the production process;

(c)	Statistical communication should focus more on topics that are relevant for people's everyday lives (such as family, health, security), speak their language and use images, clear messages and storytelling. It is a challenge to ensure that official statistics be part of decision making process both in governments and at the level of individuals;

(d)	An important target group for statistical communication are the youth and children as they are the future decisions makers. It would be useful to cooperate internationally on developing approaches to reach the young generation, including education materials on official statistics;

(e)	It is important to address also non-users, and find out why they may be sceptical about statistics. This could help to counter the trend of appealing to emotions and personal beliefs rather than facts in the public debate;

(f)	Metrics are needed to measure the success of statistical communication. An indication of a successful communication strategy can be when citizens correct fake news by using official statistics;

(g)	Communication strategy has to be taken into account in recruitment. Many statistical organizations are now hiring professional communication staff.

## C.	Session II: Communication crises – issue and reputation management

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/23, 26, 34, 35, 36

54.	Mr. M. Ackermans (the Netherlands) chaired the session. It was based on papers by Australia, Germany, Sweden, United States and HLG-MOS.

55.	The session began with interactive voting questions. The responses showed that an equal number of respondents acted reactively and proactively in communication crises. A press release to the media was considered the most common and effective response to misuse of data, followed by a press conference and a statement through channels owned by the organisation.

56.	Mr. D. Kalisch (Australia) gave a keynote presentation based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) experience with the population census in 2016 and the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey in 2017. The online platform for the 2016 census had technical difficulties which created negative media coverage. Learning from this experience, ABS used communications successfully to carry out a nation-wide survey on a sensitive topic of same sex marriage with results trusted by the community and the Australian Parliament.

57.	The following issues were raised in the discussion:

(a)	Reputation is built over time and every day. There will be enough trust to support the organisation during a crisis only if it has built up a strong reputation before;

(b)	It is important to have an effective platform for dialogue with stakeholders. If stakeholders feel engaged, they will promote and support the statistical organisation when needed;

(c)	When releasing data that may create a strong reaction among users, NSOs should carefully consider the communications and not overestimate the knowledge of experts and users. Statistical organisations are in a good position to take a leadership role and share their insights into data with users;

(d)   Several countries have a crisis communication group. A plan of how to deal with crisis should be prepared in advance, so that it can implemented quickly and effectively when a crisis happens;

58.   In her concluding remarks for the seminar, Ms. Ibrahimaj noted the following:

(a)   Communication strategy should be embedded in every process in the statistical office. Modernising communications is linked with modernising the whole statistical institution;

(b)   NSOs should define their role in society: as providers of facts, educators and source of insight and knowledge into data. Official statistics should be courageous and proactive in communicating its knowledge and insights, go where users are, and package its products and services so that they are understandable for all users;

(c)   Engaging in partnerships will help to build trust. It is important to reach non-users, and have a long-term strategy to improve statistical literacy. Developing branding guidelines and compiling best practices on improving statistical literacy would be useful;

(d)   Performance indicators are needed to measure the success of communication strategies;

(e)   NSOs should be prepared, proactive and transparent in managing crises, and act quickly. It is important to clearly distinguish between issues and crises to understand if and where to react, and carefully consider communications to avoid a ricochet effect.

1.   Action taken by the Conference

59.   The Conference emphasised the importance of effective communication for maintaining the relevance of official statistics and maximizing its value to society. Communications is integral to the strategic plan of a statistical organization.

60.   The Conference identified the following possible actions for the way forward:

(a)   Develop a communication maturity model and a roadmap for statistical organizations;

(b)   Define the communication skill set needed by all staff in a statistical organization;

(c)   Develop guidance on positioning and communicating the role and value of statistical organizations;

(d)   Share best practices in increasing statistical literacy (for example, in the younger population);

(e)   Integrate risk, communication and crisis management work to help build more resilient statistical organisations.

61.   The Conference asked the Secretariat and the CES Bureau to follow up on the issues raised during the seminar. The CES Bureau will discuss at its next meeting how to implement the proposed follow-up actions.

VIII. Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

A. Progress in implementing the Conference of European Statisticians Road Map on statistics for Sustainable Development Goals

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/39, 40

62.   Ms. R. Bielak (Poland), co-Chair of the Steering Group on statistics for SDGs, informed the Conference about progress in implementing the *CES Road Map on Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals* since its approval by CES in June 2017. UNECE presented a note describing the setup and governance structure of the custodian agencies responsible for SDG indicators, which was prepared by the Secretariat to inform the CES work on statistics for SDGs. The following points were raised in the discussion:

(a)   The Road Map is an effective resource that countries can adapt to their national circumstances. Countries have made considerable progress in its implementation;

(b)   It is important to understand how the data moves between countries and custodian agencies, including the data flows that are already well established. Discussion at global level is needed to find ways to organize the SDG data provision in an efficient and transparent manner, taking into account the needs of both countries and international organizations, and ensuring that the data are of high quality.

1. Action taken by the Conference

63.   The Conference welcomed the very good progress made in implementing the *CES Road Map on statistics for SDGs*. The work should continue under the guidance of the CES Steering Group, including the four subgroups of the Steering Group which are developing practical tools to support the implementation of the Road Map in the areas of national reporting platforms, data flows, statistical capacity, and communication of statistics for SDGs. The Conference noted that these inputs also have contributed to work at the global level. Countries interested to join the subgroups are invited to contact the UNECE secretariat. The Conference supported the proposal for a second edition of the Road Map, recommended to maintain it online as a living document, and requested the Steering Group to prepare a plan and timetable for its preparation.

64.   The Conference took note of the document ECE/CES/2018/39 describing briefly the overall governance structure and institutional setup of the custodian agencies that are responsible for the production of global SDG indicators. The Conference noted the complexity of coordinating the work across the diverse organizational structures within the UN system and with other organizations, which may create challenges in building a transparent and efficient system for providing global SDG statistics. The Conference welcomed the work being done by countries and agencies in this area, including by the Interagency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the Coordinating Committee of Statistical Activities (CCSA) to develop implementation guidelines on data flows (planned to be submitted to the UN Statistical Commission session in March 2019).

B. **Principles for rotation of members from the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe region of the Interagency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and the High-level Group on Partnership, Cooperation and Capacity Building for the 2030 Agenda (HLG-PCCB)**

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/9

65.   Ms. M. Bruun, Finland, Chairperson of the CES, presented the proposed *Principles for rotation of members from the UNECE region of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB*. An earlier version of this paper was discussed at the February 2018 CES Bureau meeting.

66.   The following issues were raised in the discussion:

        (a)   Important principles in the rotation are transparency, inclusiveness, technical expertise and continuity of the work. It is important to keep the groups' members actively engaged and motivated. The work of the groups should not suffer because of rotation of members. Keeping continuity is particularly relevant for IAEG-SDGs in the wake of the 2020 revision of indicators.

        (b)   A flexible and pragmatic approach to rotation is needed, keeping a balance between continuity and new countries joining. It may be helpful to distribute the rotation over time (e.g. stagger the terms), so that all rotations are not taking place at the same time. The rotation has to be prepared in advance to ensure the transfer of knowledge.

        (c)   Geographic balance and having all regions equitably represented is important. The rotation principles should be harmonised across all UN regions, especially as there are overlapping members between the regional commissions, while noting also that each region is different.

1. **Action taken by the Conference**

67.   The Conference discussed the Principles for rotation of members from the UNECE region of IAEG-SDGs and HLG-PCCB (ECE/CES/2018/9). The Conference agreed in principle that some transparent principles for rotation are needed. The Conference emphasised the importance of having a good balance between keeping the continuity of the work and giving an opportunity for new countries to be involved. Several possible solutions were proposed, such as staggering the terms of members in the groups so that the changes would take place at different times, establishing a mechanism for a smooth transfer of knowledge between the outgoing and incoming members, etc. The tasks of the two groups are different and the rotation principles may also differ. It was emphasised that the members of the groups should communicate and consult with other countries from their subregion. The Secretariat will update the document to reflect comments from the discussion, to be considered at the October 2018 meeting of the CES Bureau.

IX. Strategy for capacity development in United Nations Economic Commission for Europe region

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/10, 10/Add.1, 10/Rev.1

68.   Mr. S. Vale (UNECE) presented the strategy for capacity development in UNECE region. The Conference noted that the implementation of the strategy is linked to other capacity development activities in the region, such as those of PARIS21, and the UNECE task team on capacity development for SDG statistics. Switzerland informed about a

session on the role of national statistical offices in enhancing capacity development at the forthcoming World Data Forum.

1. Action taken by the Conference

69. The Conference endorsed the UNECE Statistical capacity development strategy (ECE/CES/2018/10/Rev.1). The results of the electronic consultation concerning the capacity development priorities in countries will be taken into account in planning future UNECE capacity development activities. The Conference also noted that capacity development in the areas of economic, social and demographic and environment statistics, and the projects and activities already started should continue.

X. Selection of topics for seminars to take place during the 2019 plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/19, 19/Add.1

70. The Conference selected the following topics for seminars at the CES plenary session in 2019:

A. Seminar 1: New data sources – accessibility and use

Seminar organizers: Switzerland and United States, in collaboration with Eurostat, OECD and UNSD.

Papers offered by: Georgia; Germany; Hungary, the Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovenia; South Korea; Sweden; Switzerland; UNCTAD.

B. Seminar 2: Emerging role of NSOs as offices for statistics and data

Seminar organizers: Canada, New Zealand and United Kingdom, in collaboration with UNSD

Papers offered by: Albania, Estonia, Finland (tbc), Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia.

71. The CES Bureau will discuss the organization of the seminars at its October 2018 meeting.

XI. Programme of work of the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

A. Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/14 and addenda

72. The Conference welcomed the work undertaken by the UNECE Statistical Division in implementing the Statistical Programme for 2017.

1. Action taken by the Conference

73.   The Conference confirmed the decisions of the CES Bureau as reflected in their meeting reports, and approved the report on the implementation of the 2017 UNECE Statistical Programme (document ECE/CES/2018/14 and addenda).

B.   Work of the Expert Group on national accounts

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/11

74.   The Conference considered the terms of reference for the Expert Group on National Accounts converting the group from an ad-hoc meeting into a standing body under CES. The CES Group of Experts on National Accounts plays an important role in the implementation of the System of National Accounts in the region and has a long history in facilitating the exchange of best practice among the CES member countries and beyond. The CES Bureau agreed on terms of reference for the Expert Group on National Accounts at its meeting in February 2018.

1. Action taken by the Conference

75.   In view of the importance of the issues discussed by the Group of Experts on National Accounts, organized jointly by UNECE, Eurostat and OECD, and to ensure the continuity of work, the Conference agreed to a resource neutral change in its intergovernmental structure by converting the Expert Group on National Accounts from an ad-hoc meeting into a standing body under the Conference. The Conference adopted the terms of reference for the Expert Group on National Accounts and recommended to present these to the UNECE Executive Committee for approval.

C.   Programme planning documents for the Statistics subprogramme of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/15

76.   The Conference reviewed the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2018 that was agreed by the CES Bureau at its meeting in October 2017.

1. Action taken by the Conference

77.   The Conference adopted the UNECE Statistical Programme for 2018 (ECE/CES/2018/15) including the list of planned meetings.

78.   The Conference emphasized the importance of translating into the three working languages of UNECE (English, French and Russian) the main documents for the CES plenary session and its meetings in 2018-2019 in the following areas:

   (a)   Environment, multi-domain and geo-spatial statistics;

   (b)   Demographic and social statistics (gender statistics, population and housing censuses);

   (c)   Economic statistics (national accounts, global production, business registers, consumer prices and quality of employment);

   (d)   Statistical modernization (human resources management and training);

   (e)   Statistics for Sustainable Development Goals.

79. The main documents include a provisional agenda, a report and one main document for each sub-item on the agenda. For the CES plenary session, the main documents include in addition six documents for each sub-session.

XII. Outcomes of the in-depth reviews carried out by the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians in October 2017 and February 2018

Documentation: ECE/CES/2018/16, 17, 18

80. The CES plenary session was informed about the outcomes of the recent in-depth reviews of (i) emerging issues in statistical communication, (ii) gaps in gender statistics, and (iii) measuring social exclusion, conducted by the CES Bureau in October 2017 and February 2018. The Conference encouraged the active use of in-depth review papers as a unique information resource on progress in selected statistical areas.

A. Action taken by the Conference

81. The Conference endorsed the outcomes of the in-depth reviews of (i) emerging issues in statistical communication (based on a paper by Ireland), (ii) gaps in gender statistics (based on a paper by Mexico and the Secretariat), and (iii) measuring social exclusion (based on a paper by Canada and Mexico), and the follow-up actions by the CES Bureau. The Conference noted that all in-depth review papers are available at: www.unece.org/stats/ces/reviews.html.

XIII. Other business

82. The 67th CES plenary session will take place on 26-28 (a.m.) June 2019 in Paris, back-to-back with the meeting of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy (24-25 June 2019).

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