



Economic and Social Council

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STATISTICAL COMMISSION and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Forty-second plenary session
(Paris, 13-17 June 1994)

IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE CES PLENARY SESSIONS

Prepared by the Secretariat on behalf of the Bureau

1. The Bureau has noted that the proceedings of plenary sessions have become increasingly efficient but nevertheless agreed that there is further room for improvement. The secretariat was therefore asked to prepare the present document and the Conference is asked to consider accepting it as a set of procedural guidelines for the chair to follow.

A. Objectives of plenary sessions

2. The following are those objectives of plenary sessions, in decreasing order of priority, which have a bearing on procedural issues. (This is important to spell out to provide context for the specific recommendations).

- (i) Approval of the Programme of Work of the Conference; provision of guidance to the statistical activities of the ECE and OECD; provision of a formal framework for cooperation with Eurostat and other organizations.
- (ii) Provision of guidance to the Bureau for its work between plenary sessions of the Conference.
- (iii) Maximization of opportunities for delegates to interact formally and informally.
- (iv) Discussion in some depth of the designated substantive items of the agenda.

- (v) Effective use of the time of the heads of statistical agencies attending. This implies, among other considerations:
 - (a) Completion of the accepted agenda within a reasonable time - approximately within the time allotted to each item (see below);
 - (b) Participation of a large number of delegates;
 - (c) Keeping most delegates interested during the meeting.

B. PROCEDURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

3. There should be a recommended time allocation for each item of the agenda.

4. The chair should recommend time limits for each intervention based on the number of expected interventions and the time available for the item. The number of interventions outstanding at any time should be ascertained in an on-going manner by the secretary and the chair; they should keep a running list of delegates who wish to intervene.

5. **Lengthy oral reports** on country practices should be discouraged unless they explicitly:

- (a) draw attention to what is believed to be an innovative practice from which other countries might benefit; or
- (b) highlight a point of principle of broad applicability.

Countries that wish to share other types of information with the Conference may do so by tabling Conference Room papers. The discussion of the substantive item on the agenda should, however, allow for more time per intervention.

6. The reading of **lengthy prepared written statements** is generally discouraged by members of the Conference. Where a delegation feels it important that the precise wording of a statement should be available to the Conference, they may make arrangements with the Secretariat for the distribution of such a statement in advance of, or during, the session.

7. Delegates agree to focus on **future rather than past activities** in their discussion of the work programme of the Conference and OECD, of their working groups, or of the other international bodies to which the Conference wishes to offer advice.

8. In the spirit of the previous point, the Conference also requests the Secretariat to minimize the length and incidence of **staff presentations on past accomplishments**. These should generally be made available in written form prior to the session. An exception could be made when important milestones are reached or when significant guidance is sought from the Conference.

9. Delegates should generally be **recognized by the chair** in the order that their interest to intervene was recorded. However, in order to facilitate the logical evolution of discussions, an exception to this rule should be made when a delegate wishes to comment upon a statement that has just been made.

C. Preparation and adoption of final report

10. In order to facilitate the preparation and adoption of the final report during the session, it is the Conference's wish that:

- (a) issues and decisions be recorded with only a **brief** indication of the nature of discussion;
- (b) draft reports be prepared on a flow basis as the discussion of agenda is completed.

11. Accordingly, the Secretariat will continue to make draft reports on each agenda item available to delegates as soon as they are drafted, and translations into French and Russian will also be made available as soon as they are ready. Any delegate having a **substantive** problem with the draft should indicate this fact to the Secretariat who will attempt to resolve these problems with the delegates and re-issue the report if necessary. Unresolved problems and the last parts of the report will be considered by the Conference on the last day of its session when the Report of the Conference will be formally adopted. Proposals for **editorial** changes in the draft reports should be brought directly to the attention of the Secretariat rather than being raised during discussion - these editorial changes and will be reflected as necessary in the final version of the Report which is distributed several weeks after the plenary session.