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COUNCIL

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Council

PROPOSED RENEWAL OF THE MANDATE OF THE STATISTICS COMMITTEE

(Note by the Secretary-General)

This revision reflects the amendments agreed at the Executive Committee on 7 October 2008 [CE/M(2008)29, Item 173].

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Introduction

1. The Committee on Statistics (henceforth “Committee on Statistics” or “CSTAT”) was established by Council at its 1077th session on 12 February 2004 [C/M(2004)3, Item 40]. The expiration date of the Council Resolution establishing the Committee [C(2003)217 and C(2003)217/CORR1, set out in Annex I] was set at 31 December 2008. The mandate of CSTAT thus needs to be renewed prior to this date

Background.

2. CSTAT was created in order to reinforce the overall coherence of OECD statistical activities. Notably, it was recognised in the Council Resolution that a Committee on Statistics would be a key instrument to improve the overall quality of OECD statistics, reinforcing the co-operation both among countries, and between them and the Secretariat. In addition, it would reinforce the role of the OECD in influencing the development of reliable and comparable statistics, both at national and international levels and to improve the dialogue between policy makers, analysts and data providers.

3. Since its creation in 2004, CSTAT’s Mandate has been to oversee the broad range of statistics and statistical policy issues relevant to the Organisation, including: to be responsible to Council for the statistical policy of the OECD, to ensure that the OECD statistics are produced according to high quality standards, to officially approve methodological recommendations elaborated on specific subjects, to approve common standards for data and metadata exchange between the OECD and national data providers, and to take appropriate action on any other topics submitted by the OECD Chief Statistician and relevant for conducting his/her tasks [C(2003)217 and C(2003)217/CORR1]. It is submitted that the Mandate remains suited to the pursuit of the OECD Convention objectives and should remain unchanged as for substance. It is proposed to renew it for a further period of five years, as set out in Annex I.

4. CSTAT currently has four subsidiary bodies, namely the Short-term Economic Statistics Working Party (STESWP), created on 27 October 2005; the Working Party on National Accounts (WPNA), created on 27 October 2005; the OECD Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), created in January 2004; and the Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Trade in Services Statistics (WPTGS), created on 13 June 2007. At its 9-10 June 2008 meeting, CSTAT examined the relevance of its subsidiary bodies and approved the text reprinted in Annex II of this document, proposing to extend the Mandates of WPNA, SDMX and WPTGS without any changes. CSTAT also agreed with the proposal to not extend the Mandate of the STESWP, as recommended by the Bureau of the STESWP. Once the Mandate of CSTAT has been renewed, the Committee on Statistics will proceed to renew the Mandates of WPNA, SDMX and WPTGS.

Proposed Action

5. In the light of the preceding, the Secretary-General invites the Council to adopt the following draft conclusions:

THE COUNCIL

- a) noted document C(2008)126/REV1;
- b) agreed to renew the Mandate of the Committee on Statistics set out in Annex I to document C(2008)126/REV1 for a further period of five years;
- c) noted that the Committee on Statistics will renew the mandates of three of its subsidiary bodies, namely the Working Part on National Accounts, the OECD

Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange, and the Working Party
on International Trade in Goods and Trade in Services Statistics.

ANNEX I

PROPOSED RENEWAL OF THE MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS [based on C(2003)217 and C(2003)217/CORR1 approved at its 1077th session on 12 February 2004, C/M(2004)3, Item 40]

THE COUNCIL

Having regard to the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14th December 1960 , and, in particular, articles 1, 3, 5a) and 9 thereof;

Having regard to the Rules of Procedure of the Organisation and in particular Rule 18 a) iii);

Having regard to the Financial Rules of the Organisation;

Having regard to the Council's conclusions of 25 July 2002 on the *Structures of Committees and Multidisciplinarity: Recommendations* [C/M(2002)17];

Having regard to the recommendation contained in document C(2003)176, *Implementation of the Nicholson Report Recommendations* to convert the Meeting of Chief Statisticians into a Committee on Statistics;

Having regard to document C(2003)217 and its CORR1 on the Establishment of an OECD Committee on Statistics;

Having regard to document C(2008)126/REV1 on the renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Statistics;

Recognising that the creation of a Committee on Statistics would reinforce the overall coherence of OECD activities in this field;

Noting that, in this respect, a Committee on Statistics would be a key instrument to improve the overall quality of OECD statistics, reinforcing the co-operation both among countries, and between them and the Secretariat; to reinforce the role of the OECD in influencing the development of reliable and comparable statistics, both at national and international levels and to improve the dialogue between policy makers, analysts and data providers;

On the proposal of the Secretary- General;

DECIDES:

Article 1

The Committee shall oversee the broad range of statistics and statistical policy issues relevant to the Organisation.

In carrying out its responsibilities it shall:

1. be responsible to Council for the statistical policy of the OECD, both within the Organisation and vis-à-vis the rest of the world;
2. ensure that OECD statistics are produced according to high quality standards;
3. oversee the Programme of Work and Budget of the Statistics Directorate;
4. give advice to other OECD committees and to OECD Directorates about their plans, highlighting gaps and challenges, and contributing to the development of an effective and well co-ordinated OECD Statistical Work Programme;
5. officially approve methodological recommendations elaborated on specific subjects, co-operating with other committees in charge of policy issues related to the latter, and promote their implementation;
6. approve common standards for data and metadata exchange between the OECD and national data providers;
7. take appropriate action on any other topics submitted by the OECD Chief Statistician and relevant for conducting his/her tasks.

Article 2

The Committee shall maintain a close working relationship with other relevant bodies of the Organisation, seeking to ensure that statistics within the OECD are dealt with in a well-coordinated and horizontal manner.

The Committee shall maintain, as appropriate, and in conformity with the OECD rules, relations with other international organisations, seeking to achieve co-ordinated and complementary work programmes in areas of shared interest and mutual benefit.

Article 3

The mandate shall expire on 31 December 2013, unless the Council decides otherwise.

ANNEX II

EVALUATION OF CSTAT's SUBSIDIARY BODIES [from STD/CSTAT/RD(2008)2]

1. The Committee on Statistics' mandate is set to expire at the end of 2008. As part of the OECD's integrated management cycle, Council has decided that all committees should undergo an in-depth evaluation, led by the Council prior to consideration of renewal of a Committee's mandate, so that the conclusions of the evaluation could feed into a possible revision of the mandate. However, due to resource constraints the Committee on Statistics (CSTAT) is not yet scheduled for an in-depth evaluation according to the current 2008-2009 planning. CSTAT's current mandate will thus have to be revised prior to the in-depth evaluation.

2. The Executive Committee of the Council has tentatively scheduled the consideration of CSTAT's mandate renewal for its meeting in October 2008. Prior to this meeting, CSTAT will need to agree to a new draft mandate for submission to Council.

3. The procedure for Committee renewal was adjusted in 2006, as at that time Council agreed to insert in the OECD Rules of Procedure a new Rule 21 c) as follows:

'Prior to renewal of their own mandate, Committees or subsidiary bodies established by Council shall undertake an evaluation of the continuing relevance of their own subsidiary bodies and submit to Council its results together with the proposed renewal.'

4. As a result, prior to preparing a request for renewal of its mandate, CSTAT will need to consider and agree to the continued relevance of its subsidiary bodies, namely the Short-term Economic Statistics Working Party (STESWP), the Working Party on National Accounts (WPNA), the Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX), and the Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Trade in Services Statistics (WPTGS).

Short-term Economic Statistics Working Party (STESWP)

5. The STESWP was established in October 2005 with the aim to improve the quality of short-term economic indicators in accordance with priorities established by CSTAT. In particular, it has provided recommendations and guidelines for the development and improvement of internationally comparable methodologies and statistical series and indicators to monitor short-term changes in economies. In addition, it has acted as a forum for member countries to exchange information on new methods of collection, compilation, analysis and presentation of data, as well as development of new indicators in the field of short-term economic indicators. Main achievements over the last years include:

- The Data and Metadata Reporting and Presentation Handbook, providing a single comprehensive reference set of international guidelines and recommendations for the reporting and presentation of statistical data and metadata;
- The Compilation Manual for an Index of Service Production, filling a gap in existing international statistical standards for guidelines and recommendations on the compilation of output indicators for the services sector and indeed further motivating the development of output indicators for services in the OECD region and beyond;

- Two Framework papers providing guidance and examples of best practice in the use of administrative data in compiling and disseminating statistical data;
- The development of standardised annual and quarterly unit labour cost and related indicators for OECD countries and some non-members;
- The creation of an OECD-Eurostat Task Force on Revisions Analysis and the creation of Guidelines on Revisions Policy and Analysis, including the development and provision of a software tool that allows users NSOs to conduct their own revisions analysis and the creation of an OECD Revisions Analysis database for many of the OECD's short-term statistics.

6. The Bureau of the STESWP, in reviewing the achievements of the Working Party vis-à-vis its mandate, recognised that most of the priorities have been achieved and thus has recommended that the STESWP should be concluded after the 2008 meeting. The Bureau indicated that with the completion of the 2008 meeting the Working Party through its various task-forces will have addressed a number of key issues that represented high priority 'gaps' in statistical methodology within the international statistical community relevant to short-term economic statistics. However, the Bureau feels that maintaining the established network in an unofficial capacity is of high importance, and recommends that concrete procedures for such an arrangement be put in place before the Working Party officially dissolves. This issue will be addressed at the June 2008 meeting of STESWP.

7. The Committee is invited to accept the recommendation of the STESWP Bureau (pending final decision at the June meeting of the Working Party) to conclude the Working Party at the end of its mandate, noting that the established Network will continue on a more informal basis.

Working Party on National Accounts (WPNA)

8. The Working Party on National Accounts was officially created in October 2005 with the mandate to undertake work to improve the quality of national accounts data in accordance with priorities established by CSTAT. The WPNA has followed the main objectives set out in its mandate. Main achievements over the last years include:

- Substantive contributions to the ongoing revision of the System of National Accounts, including work on general government accounts, capital measurement and measurement of R&D stocks. In addition, the Working Party has provided a forum for exposing and explaining proposals to change the 1993 SNA;
- Active co-operation with the Working Party on Financial Statistics. This has been ensured through an annual joint meeting;
- Promotion of international convergence of national accounts methods. Every meeting has focused on certain methodological issues with country contributions to the topic. Regularly, surveys have been carried out among countries on topics such as the use of supply and use tables to balance the national accounts, methods used to chain volume estimates, the valuation of land and the measurement of inventory change. These surveys, the associated discussions and the recommendations made have been highly valued by the Working Party;
- Improvement of the timeliness and coverage of national accounts data collected by the OECD from its member countries. This has been achieved through regular reporting by the Secretariat on the state of the OECD databases and discussion with countries;

- Initiation of new methodological and empirical work, for example in the area of volume measurement of health and education services;
- Liaising with non-member countries through active co-operation with the UN-ECE and its member countries and by encouraging contributions of BRICS countries to the meeting.

9. Over the next three years, the basic objectives of the WPNA as set out in the current mandate should be continued. Several tasks will be of particular importance in the foreseeable future:

- Active advancement of the implementation of the revised System of National Accounts. In many instances, it will be necessary to agree on methods for the implementation of revised recommendations (such as R&D capitalization, pension schemes) and the Working Party has an important role to play in promoting harmonized methods across countries;
- The Working Party will have to manage the differences in the timing of implementation of the revised SNA with a view to preserving comparable international data during the transition period;
- The WPNA should reinforce its role as a body where research on national accounts is carried out and advanced. As such it has a role in following up on the SNA Research Agenda;
- Links with non-member countries should be further strengthened, in response to the OECD's accession process of new member countries and the OECD's enhanced engagement efforts with other non-member economies.

10. As a result of its continued relevance to the priorities established by the Committee on Statistics, CSTAT is invited to recommend that the mandate of the WPNA be extended in line with the extension of its own mandate.

Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX)

11. The Expert Group was created in January 2004 and became an official body of CSTAT following the Committee's June 2005 meeting. The Group was set up to form a network of involved ICT experts to discuss strategic issues related to the development and practical implementation of new procedures for statistical data exchange and sharing between the OECD, its member countries and other international organisations.

12. The main purpose of the Expert Group is to identify ways of improving OECD's data collection and data sharing activities with member countries, and to promote the development and use of SDMX standards and guidelines for this purpose. The Expert Group meetings also provide an important opportunity for member countries to discuss and influence the development of SDMX standards, guidelines and tools.

13. Meetings are held on a regular basis, with a wide representation of member countries, all OECD accession countries, and occasionally participants from enhanced engagement countries and other observers. International organization participation is strong: UN/ECE, Eurostat, IMF, ECB, BIS, UNICEF, UNCTAD and UNIDO are regular participants of the Group.

14. As a result of its continued relevance in providing a forum to regularly improve data collection and related activities and to develop standards and guidelines, CSTAT is invited to recommend that the mandate of the Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange be extended in line with the extension of its own mandate.

Working Party on International Trade in Goods and Trade in Services Statistics (WPTGS)

15. Given the close interrelation of its subject matters and to better exploit synergies, this new subsidiary body of CSTAT was created in June 2007 following a proposal to transform the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Expert Group and the OECD International Trade-in-Services Statistics Expert Group into a level 2 subsidiary body of the Committee. The first meeting of the Working Party will take place in September 2008.

16. The Working Party will continue the successful *modus operandi* of past meetings of the Expert Groups with a session devoted to merchandise trade statistics, another session devoted to trade in services statistics and a combined session dealing with trade in goods and services and related analytical issues. In particular, the Working Party will:

- facilitate the development and improvement of internationally comparable methodologies in order to promote comparable, sound, consistent and coherent trade in goods statistics, trade in services statistics and trade and trade-related globalisation indicators;
- monitor and encourage implementation, in coordination with the two Inter-Secretariat Task Forces on International Merchandise Trade Statistics and on International Trade in Services Statistics, of sound conceptual frameworks, guidelines and manuals to increase the relevance and the international comparability of international trade statistics and trade and globalisation-related indicators;
- research and analyse new trends in trade to address the needs of economic and trade analysis and inform trade negotiations;
- discuss statistical issues of relevance and concern to trade statisticians and analysts and generally act as forum of exchange and springboard for methodological developments;
- oversee the collection and dissemination of relevant statistics on international trade in goods and international trade in services;
- oversee the Secretariat's work on balance of payments statistics (excluding the specialised work on detailed investment statistics);
- oversee the Secretariat's work on linking trade and business statistics as part of globalisation;
- ensure closest possible coordination and co-operation with national statistical authorities and with other International Organisations active in this field, taking on and continuing existing cooperation agreements as necessary. In particular, the Working Party will strive and continue its practice of organising meetings jointly with Eurostat so as to avoid duplication of efforts.

17. CSTAT is invited to recommend the extension of the mandate of the WPTGS in accordance with the extension of the Committee's own mandate.

Recommendation

18. The Committee is invited to accept the recommendation of the STESWP Bureau (pending final decision at the June meeting of the Working Party) to conclude the Working Party at the end of its mandate, noting that the established Network will continue on a more informal basis. The Committee is invited to recommend the extension of the mandates of the WPNA, the Expert Group on Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange, and the WPTGS, on the basis of their continued relevance to the priorities of the Committee on Statistics.