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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

Joint UNECE/UNCTAD/UNESCO/ITU/ OECD/Eurostat Statistical Workshop on Monitoring the Information Society: Data, Measurement and Methods (Geneva, 8-9 December 2003)

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD)

UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR STATISTICS (UIS)

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (Eurostat)

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

1.   Joint UNECE/UNCTAD/UIS/ITU/OECD/Eurostat Statistical Workshop: Monitoring the Information Society: Data, Measurement and Methods was held in Geneva on 8 and 9 December 2003. It was attended by Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2.   The Workshop was attended by representatives of the European Commission.

3.   Representatives of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) attended the Workshop.

4.   The following specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations also attended the Workshop: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organization (WTO), UNESCO and UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

5.   AFRISTAT also attended the Workshop.

6.   The workshop adopted the provisional agenda.

7.   Ms. Adelheid Bürgi-Schmelz (Switzerland), Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, was elected Chairperson and Mr. Eduardo Pereira Nunes (Brazil), President of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics vice Chairperson. As Ms. Bürgi-Schmelz could only take up office on 9 December the workshop agreed that Mr. Heinz Gilomen (Switzerland), Director of Society and Education Statistics of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, would act on behalf of Ms. Bürgi-Schmelz on the first day of the Workshop.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

8.   The following substantive topics were discussed at the workshop on the basis of invited and supporting papers prepared and conference room documents that organisations had contributed:

-       Opening;
-       The Role of ICTs in Economic and Societal Transformations;
-       The Age of Electronic Business (1): current status of statistical measurements;
-       The Age of Electronic Business (2): ICT indicators for Development;
-       People in the Information Society: Individual and household use and penetration of ICTs: (1) ICT penetration and digital divide;
-       People in the Information Society: Individual and household use and penetration of ICTs: (2) Methods;
-       ICTs and Society: Measuring Social Impacts of ICTs;
-       Conclusions, adoption of the report and closing.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION AND THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS REACHED AT THE WORKSHOP

9.   Conclusions and recommendations of the various sessions of the workshop are given below. Other conclusions that the participants reached at the workshop on the above topics

will be presented (in English only) in a separate report to be prepared after the workshop and distributed to participants. These conclusions will also be distributed, on request, to other interested persons. It will also be posted on the website of the UNECE.

Opening session and session II

10.   Official Statistics, Co-ordination, and Efficiency. The Workshop stressed that the *The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, which were produced and adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians in 1992 and by the United Nations (UN) in 1994, should be the foundation on which statistical organisations throughout the world should build their activity. *The Fundamental Principles* emphasise that official statistics must be compiled according to scientific methods and internationally recognised classifications and definitions.

11.   International organisations should ensure that the indicators and statistics used in the monitoring of other global programmes, e.g. the UN's Millennium Development Goals, can also be exploited in the monitoring process of the information society.

12.   Systematic statistical monitoring requires organisation, co-ordination and division of responsibilities among international bodies. To avoid duplication of effort, an inventory of the information international organisations already possess, and of the recommendations that have been issued, should be prepared. This would facilitate the successful selection of core indicators, of all the possible available measures, which is the major challenge to the monitoring of the development of the information society.

13.   While the OECD and Eurostat have done extensive work in monitoring the progress towards the information society, means are needed for international organizations to provide assistance to less developed countries in their development and compilation of basic statistics and of indicators describing the information society. There are also statistics from private sector organizations, but they do not always provide the same public disclosure of statistical methods that is fundamental in the production of official statistics

14.   Information Society Indicators. The workshop noted that as from the second half of the 1990s the importance of ICT as an economic factor attracted greater attention. To this end the need for internationally comparable data on the information society became apparent and assumed a high priority.

15.   The lack of comprehensive and internationally compatible data could pose serious problems in a rapidly changing and increasingly information-based world economy. Moreover, a common framework for indicators and standard definitions needs to be developed, tested and shared among countries for better understanding of technology diffusion and use, communication infrastructures, and services and content.

16.   Attention was drawn to the activity-based definition for the ICT sector, which the OECD approved in 1998 and which has subsequently became an international standard.

17.   The second thrust of the work to improve the measurement of ICT has concentrated on developing common methodologies to improve the international comparability of surveys that

measure the use of ICT in households, businesses and government. A model questionnaire for measuring ICT usage in businesses was presented by the OECD in 2000, followed by one for households and individuals in 2002.

18.   Given the clear need for more than one definition of electronic transactions, the OECD has developed a narrow one, based on electronic commerce restricted to the Internet, and a broader one that encompasses all computer-mediated networks.

19.   The advent of official estimates of e-commerce had an important impact in terms of tempering the hype that surrounded e-commerce. While e-commerce was growing quickly, it was clear that the official estimates were significantly lower than the data being generated by private sector market research firms.

20.   As the information society developed, attention was drawn to whether or not new determinants of growth such as ICT could explain an observed divergence in growth trends across countries during the 1990s. Work carried out by the OECD in this area concluded that no one factor can independently lead to superior growth, but rather it is the interaction of a constellation of events and conditions that led some countries to perform better than others. Sound monetary and fiscal policy, or well functioning labour markets, have been recognised for some time as fundamental requirements.

21.   The OECD's work distinguished three ways in which the impacts ICT affect economic growth and business performance. Capital deepening through investment in ICT is important for economic growth. The second important economic impact of ICT is linked to having a sector producing ICT goods and services.

22.   The third, and most crucial, impact of ICT that shows up at the aggregate level is the use of ICT. Several studies have examined the performance of those sectors of the economy that are intensive users of ICT. Many of these are located in the service sector, e.g. industries such as finance, business services and distribution. In some countries there is evidence that those sectors that have invested most in ECT, such as wholesale and retail trade, have experienced an increase in the overall efficiency of using labour and capital, or multifactor productivity growth. This could be because these sectors have received productivity gains from ICT use over and above the labour productivity gains they received from investment in ICT, for instance because of network effects.

23.   The largest economic benefits of ICT are typically observed in countries with high levels of ICT diffusion. But having the equipment, or networks, is not enough to derive economic benefits. Other factors, such as the regulatory environment, the availability of appropriate skills, the ability to change organisational set-ups, as well as the strength of accompanying innovations in ICT applications, affect the ability of firms to make ICT effective in the workplace and seize the benefits of ICT.

24.   Firm-level studies, based on longitudinal databases, also show that the use of ICT is part of a much broader range of changes that help firms to enhance performance. The impacts of ICT are not guaranteed, but depend on complementary investments, e.g. in appropriate skills, and on organisational changes, such as new strategies, new business processes and new organisational structures.

25.   Firm-level evidence also shows that ICT is no panacea. Firms may well over-invest in ICT, either in an effort to compensate for lack of skills or competitive pressure, or because they lack a clear market strategy.

26.   What does the empirical evidence on the economic impacts of ICT imply for policy? The most important implication concerns the business environment. Governments should reduce unnecessary costs and regulatory burdens on firms to create a business environment that promotes productive investment.

27.   An important challenge that has not yet been adequately addressed is to measure the impact of ICT beyond the economy and into society and culture.

28.   Developing a Coherent Framework to Classify Indicators. A framework is required to provide a coherent structure for IS indictors and to link them to policy issues.

29.   Within the framework, IS indicators can be classified as related to the:

-     *Readiness* to use IS products, including the degree to which the labour force has acquired the appropriate skills
-     *Intensity* of Use, or *Usage*, of IS products; and the
-     *Impact* of using IS products.

30.   The OECD has developed a framework as part of its IS statistical activity and this has been used by the ASEAN e-Measurement Workshop, which also took note of the e-Europe measurement framework. Thailand has taken the basic indicators for the OECD and ASEAN to arrive at 129 indicators. These initiatives show that there is work in progress.

31.   A keynote address suggested using an agreed set of policy issues to develop a method of measuring the Information Society by classifying the policy issues by interest groups, and then assigning the individual indicators to these groups. For each indicator, an agreed convention on terminology and classification of the measurement would be required in order to standardize the work.

32.   In practice, a country may regard some policy issues as not relevant to its development. For some LDCs, for example, there is no need to measure broadband access, or PKI because they are not yet priorities. On the other hand, there is no need to talk about basic telephone line penetration for highly advanced countries, which are already using broadband access and advanced mobile services.

33.   In conclusion the Workshop recommended that:

-     A framework and a set of indicators be brought forward to the next WSIS;

-     The OECD continue to develop its IS framework, and related indictors, with its member and observer countries, the Voorburg Group and Eurosat, while taking note of work in other international organizations, such as the ASEAN;

-    Best practices for measuring IS activities be shared by all international organizations, including definitions, software/statistical tools, model surveys, inventories of indicators and recommendations for their use, and means of capacity building;

-    Regional organizations may further encourage the efficient statistical compilation of measurements by, for example, sharing a monitoring website and providing statistical and measurement training.

Session III

34.   The session focused on the current status of statistical measurements of electronic business through two country experiences – Canada, an early innovator in this area and a catalyst for much of the international work undertaken at the OECD and Malaysia, a rapidly developing country whose economy is in the midst of a paradigm shift towards a "knowledge based" economy but whose statistical system is still rooted in an earlier stage of economic development.

35.   While these two cases present rather different experiences, a number of elements are common to both. The first is the pervasive nature of the technology and its impact which is far broader than business and economics. The second is the difficulty of measuring this phenomenon with existing statistical tools and the need to adapt statistical systems and create new methods to adequately measure new business activity like e-commerce. In this regard, both speakers underscored the need for international co-operation and collaboration so that experiences can be shared and best practices identified.

36.   Again, while the two countries are very different, they both face somewhat similar challenges as they work within their individual bureaucracies. Both face resource constraints that limits what can be done, both are striving to use the Internet as a tool for collecting data on e-business with perhaps more difficulty than expected but both are dedicated to deepening their efforts to better understand the transformation of the value-chain by ICT. Interestingly, while the Canadian system has made better progress in institutionalising the collection of eBusiness measures than in Malaysia, the Malaysian perspective argues for a fundamental re-thinking of the whole statistical system and as such is more holistic than incremental.

37.   The main recommendations to emerge from the session include:

-    Closely link data collection to analysis that uses the data to provide insight into policy issues of interest to policy makers and strategies of governments. This will help to build and sustain institutional support for official statistical work in this area;

-    Deepen our understanding of e-business by moving beyond e-commerce and into the broader realm of e-business processes such as inventory control, supplier relations and customer management;

- Improve our methods for measuring the impacts of e-business and that these measures need to include sectors other than business like government.
- Work to adapt our measurement systems (e.g. classification systems) to better support information society statistical work;

- Collaborate across countries to share experiences, build statistical infrastructures together and identify best methods that can be shared. Included in this is how to use the Internet to facilitate data collection and reduce response burden; how to best use existing surveys and administrative data to obtain data while minising burden and cost. In addition, countries should explore how to collectively measure the activity of multinational enterprises engaging in e-business which is currently beyond the reach of any one statistical agency. This can be done through bilateral exchanges, regional groups and through international statistical forums such as those hosted by the OECD, Eurostat and the UN Statistical Commission.

- Especially for developing countries this will require explicit training and knowledge-sharing sessions.

Session IV (adopted amendments not yet included)

38.   New technology affects every country. It creates new conditions for competition in many markets and offers opportunities for access that have a strong impact on consumers and citizens.

39.   As a factor that may contribute to development but that also creates risks for companies and individuals, new technology is obviously important to Governments.

40.   To support their policies, Governments need indicators that will enable them to assess how well their country is prepared for the implementation of new technology ("e-readiness"), to observe the spread of such implementation ("e-intensity") and, lastly, to measure the impact of new technology ("e-impact") on the conduct of business and on the population.

41.   It is the job of statisticians to propose statistical indicators that meet their Governments' expectations in this and possibly other respects and that can be produced with a sufficient degree of reliability.

42.   It is crucial to aim for internationally comparable indicators in order to be able to measure one's country against comparable States. For this reason, indicators should preferably be selected from among those that have already been adopted at international level, for example by the OECD. The adoption of indicators through regional consultations is strongly recommended, since this increases the opportunities for comparative assessments.

43.   However, the choice of indicators should take account of the national context so as to reflect the country's level of development, economic profile and social characteristics.

44.   The experience of the most advanced developed and developing countries in adopting new technology has shown that the statistical indicators needed can be defined in accordance with the following model:

- Infrastructure;
- Ease and cost of access;
- Information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and uses, and the population's know-how;
- ICT equipment in the health sector and its uses;
- ICT equipment in the education system and the integration of ICT in educational programmes;
- ICT equipment in companies and its uses;
- Skill levels of staff in the business sector;
- Development of e-commerce;
- ICT equipment used by the authorities and its uses.

Session V

45.   The Information Society involves myriad issues, including availability and access to ICT hardware, software and applications, amount and dexterity of usage, overall outcomes and longer-term impacts. However, at the end of the day, it is not about any of them alone. The Information Society has to be about people. After all, public policies, business strategies, and the measurements needed to guide them, are but intermediate steps for the only end goal admissible: people and our lives.

46.   Therefore, the importance of meaningful, reliable and internationally comparable official measurements of ICT connectivity among people is both evident and paramount. Information on past, current and expected future access and utilization of ICTs is indispensable in the design, implementation and evaluation of rational and informed interventions. Central in all that is the issue of the Digital Divide. Simply put, we cannot move forward while leaving substantial masses of population behind – across countries or within.

47.   The European Commission presented key policies and targets, as well as placed them in a macro perspective. It offered a hierarchy of measurements, starting from basic ICT access and moving to broadband. It also made the link between people's connectivity and policy priorities, such as e-government, e-businesses, e-learning and e-health. It emphasized that universal access is clearly an "economic necessity as well as a social goal".

48.   The ITU paper made a well-documented case for the dire need of measurements. Not only "the statistical divide is as great as the digital divide", but it is widening. This is so due to the increasing inadequacy of traditional supply-side indicators and the need for new survey-based demand-side indicators, which are vital today to identify disparities, track progress and benchmark internationally. It clearly placed the priority on access and infrastructure data, while also exploring the potential of community indicators in the context of developing countries.

49.   The discussion that followed reinforced the enormous gaps in the availability of statistics among nations and articulated the needed for immediate and concerted action. While ongoing efforts by the OECD and Eurostat over recent years were commended, and efforts at early stages in several countries in Asia and Latin America are encouraging, it was re-iterated that there is dearth of quantitative information in most developing nations. This limits severely the conduct of reliable and objective analyses of relative stages of development, and therefore relative needs, seriously hampers policy efforts and blindfolds decision makers. In view of the potential for paralysis from this situation, the session made the following recommendations.

50.   The following recommendations and conclusions were made in session V of the workshop:

-       Urgent need for assistance. There is an immediate need for financial resources and diffusion of expertise to developing nations to establish measurement programs aimed at producing official Information Society statistics as part of their national system, according to international standards and at regular intervals. Considering the nature of the informational needs, this refers chiefly to the establishment and carrying out of survey programs. While this need has been increasingly identified at the highest political levels, so far no resources have been allocated. The need is equally applicable to international bodies with responsibility to compile statistics for international comparisons, as well as extends to developed countries in order to solidify recent initiatives that serve as examples. After all, the value of information in an Information Society cannot be treated as an afterthought.

-       Core Indicators. While the session did not produce a definitive list of indicators as such, it clearly identified priority areas of measurement. Penetration rates of older and new ICTs, including Internet users, among households and individuals are a must. These must be complemented with appropriate decompositions by socio-economic sub-group, particularly by income, age, gender, region (i.e. urban vs. rural), family type etc. Such statistics will help target policies to alleviate the digital divide. Following basic connectivity, and depending on the relative stage of development of different countries, measurements of actual usage of ICTs, including purpose, frequency and intensity, become more important. Practically, the two sets of indicators can be produced in parallel through the same survey vehicles. In addition to data, the dissemination of such information should include all pertinent metadata information as well.

-       International collaboration should intensify to arrive at an agreed-upon set of core indicators that could be monitored across all nations and over time, built on already existing work. Every effort should be made to have such a list in place well before the Tunis Summit of 2005.

-       International standards. As this is a new area, it becomes doubly important that new measurements are comparable internationally. For that, there is a need to solidify and

diffuse existing standards, as well as intensify collaboration to produce and diffuse new ones.

-        It is desirable that all along *harmonized concepts, definitions and methods*, developed within the framework of the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*, are used so as to maximize the collective value of statistical outputs. The production by the OECD of the *Guide for Information Society Measurements* will help diffuse such standards, but more efforts through international collaboration will be needed to expand the scope of measurement activities, with appropriate adaptations for the context of developing nations as necessary. Input of other international organisations should be taken into account.

Session VI

51.   Contributions in this session reiterated the need for a shortlist of common indicators with internationally shared definitions and compatible methodology, while recognising the primary duty of NSOs to provide data for national demands. Transparency of methodology is critical, and the case was strongly put for a co-ordinated approach by international organisations in this area.

52.   Methods for monitoring how ICT affects people should be considered in the context of an 'adoption model', as suggested by OECD. This type of approach has a place for most measurement approaches:

-        administrative or regulatory data;
-        surveys of communication service suppliers;
-        surveys of households or individuals as supplements to 'omnibus' or other survey vehicles;
-        purpose designed stand-alone surveys.

53.   Initial approaches to measuring new aspects of technology used in many countries have been based on adding limited numbers of questions to existing surveys because:

-        large scale surveys are needed to obtain statistically valid results for estimates of phenomena during early adoption;
-        this is the most cost effective route to begin measurement.

54.   In choosing how to use survey vehicles it is essential to recognise differences between:

-        surveys based on households, which can give information on access conditions, equipment and technology available to a group of people, and household spending
-        surveys based on individuals, which can give information about use, attitudes, barriers, behaviour, personal expenditure and activity in the labour market.

55.   To achieve best understanding of how ICT access and use affects social and economic behaviour, specialised surveys reflecting the position of individuals within households are the

ideal. However most statistical organisations are not in a position to do this because it is resource intensive, or requires very well developed statistical infrastructure.

56.   Use of different methods through the adoption process can be broadly summarised as follows:

Infrastructure readiness   - administrative / regulatory data on communications

Individual readiness   - household surveys of technology ownership
                              - administrative data on other forms of access
                              - individual surveys on attitudes / barriers

Individual use   - communications provider surveys / admin data for aggregates
                              - individual surveys on ICT use patterns and intensity

Individual impact   - surveys to link ICT use to changed time use
                              - surveys linking to changed expenditure patterns
                              - surveys linking to changed social or employment interaction

57.   No national statistics organisation yet has an integrated approach to all of these, although those countries with comprehensive statistical infrastructure and population registers are able to approach it. The ability to be able to link data on ICT use to other information - not just on age / gender / income / household type, but also on aspects of economic and social behaviour - is of value to policymakers in analysing effects of ICT on society.

58.   Methods for gathering information:

-       *personal interviews:* used by many statistical offices, for accuracy, response and representative sampling

-       *telephone interviews:* used by most private researchers, more efficient but may introduce lower response and sampling bias which is difficult to correct in new phenomena

-       *computer based questionnaires:* very effective in understanding behaviour of a subset of the population, but can be self-selecting

-       *ISP surveys:* low cost method for measurement of aggregates; degree of detail available depends on local regulatory structure

-       *Internet traffic and web site analysis:* not as yet used by more than a few statistics organisations; work is needed, subject t privacy, confidentiality and security guarantees, to test how far this can supply low cost internet usage statistics.

59.   Other sources and methods used in private sector surveys (e.g. logging activity in households using planted software) can give very detailed micro-data to help understand patterns of behaviour which is of commercial - and perhaps public - interest. As governments

start to move towards targets for electronic delivery of services, these monitoring methods will be increasingly relevant.

Session VII

60.   ICTs have far-reaching implications not just for the economic domain, but also for societies as a whole. Access to and use of ICTs should be viewed as a means towards the improvement of quality of life, and not be considered as an end into itself.

61.   The issue of the Digital Divide has been a key driver behind the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). ICTs have the potential to accentuate existing economic imbalances and social inequalities. Access to equal opportunities is necessary to avoid creating an even bigger gap between socially advantaged and disadvantaged and haves and have-nots.

62.   The worldwide social consequences of ICTs and more specifically the digital divide can be analysed:

-        With cross-country comparisons of ICTs indicators;
-        By looking at intra-country differences (in terms of key variables like income, education, gender, geographical location, family type);
-        By investigating specific sectors of society (such as households and individuals, business, government, education, health).

63.   International organizations usually concentrate on cross-country analyses. To do that, they usually work with national aggregates. Session VII of the present Workshop focused, on the one hand, on one of the important intra-country analyses: the digital gap between men and women, and, on the other hand, on education as one of the important societal sectors where specific data is needed to analyze the social impacts of ICT appropriately.

64.   In its deliberation, the Workshop recommended that further work on the development of indicators for the Information Society should:

-        encourage countries to collect data on ICT infrastructure and usage of individuals (and not only households) as well as individual barriers to use ICT (effectively), ICT skills, and purposes of ICT use, while ensuring the disaggregation of this data by socio-economic background (gender, age, education, income).

-        encourage countries to learn from experiences in other countries and to use conceptual and methodological work carried out in the OECD context (see for instance model survey of households/individuals), while taking into account the differing reality of developing countries.

-        include, in international benchmarking exercises, indicators that measure the digital divide not only between countries but also within countries between different social groups (men/women, better/less well educated, higher/lower income, younger/older).

- encourage the development of tools to measure the social impacts of ICTs on the different social groups and regions within countries, as well as between countries.

65.   In the field of education the work on internationally agreed ICT indicators is not as advanced as in other fields. Serious information gaps exist regarding the role of ICTs in reshaping education to respond to the needs and challenges of the Information Society.

66.   The Workshop recommended that further work in the field of ICT and education should:

- be integrated within regional and international networks as well as systems of official statistics, involving educational policy makers and administrators in the process.

- take notice of the indicators developed in the Performance Indicators Project within the Asian-Pacific network as a potential template for use by other similar initiatives in other parts of the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

67.   In concluding the Workshop, the following action plan was agreed upon:

68.   The five UN Regional Commissions should, in cooperation with competent regional organisations, commit themselves to organise, within each region, one ICT related meeting in 2004 on the monitoring the information society issue. Both, users of statistics and producers of official statistics, should work together in the same meeting.

69.   These meetings are intended to provide input for a global summary meeting in early 2005 in order to prepare an action plan for the next WSIS Summit in Tunis.

70.   The items on the agenda could be more concrete on the demand for ICT statistics at national level (which ICT statistics are most relevant, and why, for national policy - makers), and on how to best ensure that such statistics are produced as regular parts of official statistics. The set of indicators prepared by international organisations and their methods, logical guidelines for data collection, can be a starting point, but it is to be expected that country needs (and the limited statistical infrastructure of many countries) will require some adaptation.

71.   Assistance from statistically advanced countries would be very welcome.

72.   The regional meetings could be organised in conjunction with a regular statistics or ICT related meetings in order to save resources.

73.   One participating organisation will be named to serve as a coordinator and as a focal point for the exchange of information in this meeting process.

74.   Assuming that there will be a statistical side-event like this workshop that is being organised in conjunction with the Tunis Summit, the results of the regional meetings could be

presented at such a meeting. If not, they would be presented to the UN Statistical Commission directly.