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General comments in relation to the document

**Draft update of UNSD and WTO Recommendations on Tourism Statistics
including Draft Provisional List of Tourism Specific Products**

(PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1)

This document is submitted by:

- EUROSTAT: Statistical Office of the European Communities,
- OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

for consideration at the Thirty-first session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC), 29 February-3 March 2000.

This document has been prepared jointly by Eurostat and the OECD following discussions in the WTO/OMT - OECD - Eurostat Inter-secretariat Working Group on Tourism Statistics (IWG/Tour). The IWG was created in September, two months after the WTO “Enzo Paci World Conference on the Measurement of the Economic Impact of Tourism” and the 1999 Plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians.

The Enzo Paci World Conference recommended that the WTO prepare, jointly with OECD and EUROSTAT, a common conceptual Tourism Satellite Account framework and its associated attachments and draft technical manuals, and forward the common conceptual Tourism Satellite Account framework for final endorsement by the UN Statistical Commission.

The WTO submitted in December 1999 a document, *Draft update of UNSD and WTO Recommendations on Tourism Statistics including Draft Provisional List of Tourism Specific Products* (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1), to accompany the draft *Tourism Satellite Account: Methodological References*, for consideration by the UN Statistical Commission.

At the IWG meeting in Madrid 10-11 February 2000, Eurostat and the OECD agreed on the need to launch a broad exercise of reviewing existing definitions on tourism statistics (1993 UN/WTO Recommendations on Tourism Statistics). This would include consultations with users and producers of statistics and reflect both experiences of implementing the 1993 definitions as well as any new needs for revised or more detailed definitions related to tools such as Tourism Satellite Accounts.

As a consequence, the two organisations have agreed to launch, at an international level, a broad review exercise of the 1993 recommendations together with their respective member countries. Accordingly, Eurostat and the OECD does not recommend the endorsement of the proposed update of part I on basic tourism concepts and definitions of document PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1 at this stage. However, the two organisations do recommend the adoption of part III of document PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1, containing the draft provisional list of tourism specific products, since this list is of importance for countries wanting to implement a Tourism Satellite Account. Notwithstanding present adoption, the list can be considered having a provisional character which leaves a possibility of revision as needed on the basis of subsequent experience.

**Draft update of UNSD and WTO Recommendations on Tourism Statistics
including Draft Provisional List of Tourism Specific Products
(PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1)**

At its twenty-seventh session, in 1993, the UN Statistical Commission adopted basic recommendations on tourism statistics, developed by the WTO in co-operation with countries and other international organisations. Since then countries all over the world have been implementing these definitions.

At a European level, the adoption of the 1993 Recommendations led to the development of a methodological reference framework, which is fully in line with the UN/WTO recommendations, but also reflects and adapts some of the definitions to European needs and specific contexts. This work was done in close co-operation with the European Union (EU) Member States and led to the publication in 1998 of the Community Methodology on Tourism Statistics.

Moreover, in 1995 a Council Directive (95/57/EC¹) on the collection of statistical information in the field of tourism was adopted. This legal act requires regular data collection of basic variables on tourism supply and demand. In relation to the implementation of this Directive a number of measures have been discussed and approved by the Member States and the European Commission. This concerns in particular the definitions to be applied to the variables in the annex of the Directive. These definitions are based on the Community Methodology on Tourism Statistics which were approved in 1998 in the Commission Decision (1999/34/EC²) as the procedures for implementing the Council Directive.

The Member States of the EU have invested a lot of effort in adapting their national statistical systems to the Directive requirements and its implementing provisions, and the work to consolidate the implementation process is still underway. Eurostat would therefore recommend that the update of basic tourism definitions should mainly build on experiences in countries in implementing the UN/WTO recommendations and the Community methodology, particularly in view of the fact that many of these definitions are now part of the EU legal framework on which countries are obliged to base their own national definitions. The OECD has expressed a recognition of this standpoint.

In view of the fact that the proposal for an update of the 1993 recommendations (PROV/ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/83/Rev.1) has not yet been subject to detailed discussion within the Inter-secretariat Working Group, nor with the organisations' respective member countries, Eurostat's and the OECD's general point of view is that it is not advisable to approve part I of the proposed document (including the update of the definitions) at the UNSC meeting. This is particularly important considering that the whole chapter on tourism expenditure (previously chapter VI) has been replaced by a new chapter on visitor consumption. This needs to be discussed thoroughly with member countries before deciding to change the definition of such basic and important concepts in tourism statistics.

As a result, Eurostat and the OECD consider that an update of tourism statistics definitions needs a careful examination based on practical experiences gained on implementing the existing definitions, in particular those which have been applied in the frame of the European Directive. This should be a process involving discussions

¹ OJ N° L291, 6.12.1995, p.32

² OJ N° L 9, 15.1.1999, p.23

with both users and producers of tourism statistics and detailed consultation needs to be undertaken with member countries.

Moreover, it would be useful to launch a broader exercise of reviewing the existing definitions, on the one hand based on gained experiences, and on the other hand based on new needs such as economic impact and analysis of tourism (TSA), impact of tourism on the environment, tourism employment, etc, thus not restricting the update based only on the needs of the TSA framework.

It is important to point out that a review of existing definitions will be carried out in close co-operation between international organisations and the member countries.

Nevertheless, concerning the part III of the proposed up-date document: *The provisional list of tourism specific products*, Eurostat and the OECD support its endorsement by the UNSC since it does not concern an update of existing classifications and because it is useful as a basic tool for implementing the Tourism Satellite Account. Notwithstanding present adoption, the list can be considered having a provisional character which leaves a possibility of revision as needed on the basis of subsequent experience.

In addition, the fact that the update of the tourism recommendations should be part of a broader exercise and built on experiences in implementing the existing ones, should not cause any problems in approving and applying the standards of the proposed common conceptual framework for Tourism Satellite Accounts. The work on implementing this methodology can be done in parallel with work on reviewing the basic tourism statistics definitions.