



Final report

**Meeting of Experts in Labour Statistics on the Advancement
of Employment and Unemployment Statistics**
(Geneva, 28 January – 1 February 2013)

Geneva, 2013

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Department of Statistics

MESEU/2013/1

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Introduction

1. At its 313th Session (March 2012), the Governing Body of the International Labour Office decided to convene a meeting of experts in labour statistics. The Meeting was held in Geneva from 28 January to 1 February 2013.

Agenda of the Meeting

2. The terms of reference for the Meeting were to examine the issues relating to the revision of the current international standards on statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment from the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS, 1982), as well as the development of measures of labour underutilization to supplement the unemployment rate. The conclusions of the meeting of experts would be taken into account by the Office to develop proposals for presentation to the 19th ICLS in October 2013, with a view to adopting new, revised international standards.

Participants

3. Twenty-four experts were invited to the Meeting, 12 following consultation with Governments (Australia, Brazil, France, India, Ireland, Morocco, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda and the United States) as well as six experts nominated by the Employers' group and six nominated by the Workers' group of the Governing Body. Present also at the Meeting as observers were representatives of intergovernmental organizations, (the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Sub-Saharan Economic and Statistical Observatory, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the World Bank) and of non-governmental organizations (the International Organization of Employers, the International Trade Union Confederation). The list of participants is given at the end of the report.

1. Opening of the Meeting

1.1. Background

4. The deliberations were based on a report¹ prepared by the ILO in its three working languages (English, French and Spanish). The report summarized the rationale underlying the review of the current standards, and described the main proposals to revise and update the body of international statistics on the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment. It also contained a draft resolution concerning statistics of work and the labour force in its appendix.

¹ ILO: *Statistics of work and of the labour force*, report for discussion at the Meeting of Experts in Labour Statistics on the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, Geneva, 2013 (MESEU/2013).

1.2. Opening remarks and election of the Chairperson

5. In his opening remarks, Mr M.H. Ozel, Chief, Standards and Surveys Unit, ILO Department of Statistics, welcomed all the experts and observers to the Meeting. The Department Director, Mr Rafael Diez de Medina, explained that this meeting of experts was part of a consultation process for developing international standards whose participants were there in their personal capacity as experts, not as representatives of their respective institutions. The unique tripartite character of the Meeting meant that its recommendations would be embedded in strong social partner collaboration that would enrich the process of statistical application. He further indicated that the body of expertise in the field of labour statistics was highly developed but needed to evolve with the times so as to reflect the latest ideas and practices in order to move forward, not necessarily representing practices of any specific country or group of countries. He reminded the experts that the objective of the Meeting was not to amend, revise or adopt a statistical instrument but rather to assist the Office in preparing meaningful proposals in order to reach consensus on a revised resolution for the 19th ICLS.
6. He then explained that the proposal before them responded to the calls by the 18th ICLS and other international forums to update the international standards for the measurement of employment, to develop broader measures of labour underutilization to complement the unemployment rate and to measure all forms of work. This proposal responded to the need for more relevant information to monitor labour markets, taking into account both their economic and social aspects, as well as to render visible the contribution of all forms of work to the economy, to social development and to well-being.
7. Mr Diez described the extensive consultations the ILO had carried out in the form of a Working Group for the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics that had met three times since 2009, and regional consultations with national statistical offices and regional institutions in Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, Asia-Pacific and Europe, to best reflect the particularities in different world settings.
8. He also informed the Meeting that the ILO was planning to carry out pilot tests, in 2013 and beyond, to evaluate and further refine some of the specific proposals. He reiterated the opportunity of this Meeting to strengthen the proposal to be considered by the 19th ICLS so that the revised standards to be adopted would reflect not only the current realities but would also be capable of withstanding the economic and social changes and challenges ahead.
9. Mr Gurucharan Manna (India) was elected to chair the Meeting. He thanked the experts from the governments and social partners and the other participants for contributing to the process of adopting guidelines on a subject so relevant for working life. He felt that it was very important to have a body of international guidelines on concepts and definitions and particularly on a set of indicators to serve for worldwide comparisons. He thanked the ILO for its excellent report and looked forward to the detailed discussions that the experts would bring.
10. In presenting the draft agenda for adoption by the Meeting, the Chairperson indicated that for each session, reference was given to timing and the paragraphs in the report to the Meeting and its draft resolution in the appendix, in order to guide discussions. Prior to its adoption, some experts noted that the agenda did not completely reflect resolution III adopted by the 18th ICLS concerning further development as part of the measurement of decent work, of measures of labour underutilization complementary to the unemployment rate, notably regarding labour slack, low earnings and skills mismatch. There was concern that the new resolution would replace the previous standards on underemployment and inadequate employment situations (adopted by the 16th ICLS), without allocated time for discussion at this Meeting. As was confirmed, only paragraph 8(1) of the resolution

adopted by the 16th ICLS would be replaced. Discussion of this topic was foreseen by the Office when measures of labour underutilization were covered in the agenda and if additional time were required it could be allocated. The Meeting then proceeded to adopt the provisional agenda as had been proposed by the Office.

2. Technical discussions

2.1. Overview

- 11.** The Office, represented by Ms Elisa Benes of the Department of Statistics, reiterated the important role of the meeting of experts to provide specific technical guidance and inputs on the approach being proposed, including concepts, definitions and operational guidelines, as well as on issues of terminology. Furthermore, she requested that the Meeting comment on the overall scope and structure of the draft resolution before it, as well as provide reactions to specific issues raised. Ms Benes recalled that the purpose of international statistical standards comprised two main objectives, namely to provide guidance to countries and to promote international comparability of national statistics. The ILO was mandated by resolution III of the 18th ICLS to review and develop new proposals for measures of labour underutilization, and by the UN Statistical Commission in its 39th Session in 2008, to revise its current standards of employment and unemployment. In explaining the reasons for the call to review the current standards, she cited the need for broader policy focus on social as well as economic development, the need for statistics on all kinds of work and on underutilization that would better inform policies for changing labour markets. She also referred to the need to improve the integration of statistics on all forms of work and with other fields of statistics. Such work should take advantage of the experience gained based on good practices in countries developed over 30 years, thereby improving the guidelines, consolidating related standards and promoting international comparability.
- 12.** She listed the body of international statistical standards that were being revised, namely, the resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment (13th ICLS, 1982); paragraph 8(1) of the resolution concerning the measurement of underemployment and inadequate employment situations (16th ICLS, 1998); the amended paragraph 5 of the 13th ICLS resolution (18th ICLS, 2008); the Guidelines on implications of employment promotion schemes on measurement of employment and unemployment (14th ICLS, 1987); and the Guidelines concerning the treatment in employment and unemployment statistics of persons on extended absences from work (16th ICLS, 1998). Other statistical standards on related issues, including those on informality, employment-related income, working time and classification of occupations, remained valid.
- 13.** According to the body of standards being revised, the objective of statistics on employment was to reflect the labour inputs that produced the goods and services which were included in the System of National Accounts (SNA). If perfectly consistent, employment would include not only paid employees and the self-employed in market enterprises, but also all trainees who produce goods and services, all producers of goods for own final use, all volunteers producing goods and volunteers producing services for market and non-market enterprises. No country currently achieved this consistency, and national practice varied significantly. Some included all trainees, others only those who were paid and some excluded all of them. Some included producers for own final use and very few included volunteer workers. Developed countries tended to include workers who received remuneration, but they also included contributing family workers who were not directly remunerated. Developing countries tended to include some unpaid workers; but

neither group followed the current labour force conceptual framework consistently. The result was national statistics on employment which were not comparable.

- 14.** The proposal sought to overcome these limitations by covering all work activities, although not all were to be considered as employment. It put forth one integrated framework that identified different forms of work in an economy distinguished by their “main purpose”, that is, to generate an income, to acquire skills, to benefit others, to produce for own consumption, or other purposes. According to this framework, the purpose of employment was to generate income. Many persons, however, could be engaged in more than one form of work. The draft resolution further incorporated three measures of underutilization, including unemployment, to more comprehensively represent persons with different types of unmet need for employment. This was a flexible framework designed to meet multiple user needs as referred to above.
- 15.** Finally, Ms Benes stressed that the main features of the proposal would be relevant in all world contexts and described the structure of the draft resolution, containing ten parts: preamble; objectives; conceptual framework; scope and coverage; concepts and operational definitions; data collection; derived measures and indicators; tabulations and classifications; evaluation, communication and dissemination; and international reporting.
- 16.** In the discussion that followed there was general support for the structure and scope of the proposed resolution. It responded well to the range of statistical needs and it clarified the distinction between employment and other forms of work.
- 17.** Many experts considered that using “main purpose” to distinguish between forms of work was problematic, particularly as it classified paid trainees together with other trainees, for example, unpaid or paying, outside of employment and inside “trainee work”. Some considered that paid apprentices were very close, or the closest, to the labour market and that, for many, their main purpose was to generate income, with the view to improving their income generating capacity in the future. However, other experts recommended that not only paid but also unpaid trainees should be included in employment; otherwise, given that they would likely not be seeking employment, they would risk being classified as outside the labour force. In addition, the proposal seemed to contradict current standards on employment-related income, which covered payment to paid apprentices and trainees. It also contrasted with the inclusion, within employment, of persons working for only one hour and receiving a petty pay. If the main purpose of employment in the new proposal was to generate an income, the rationale for maintaining the one-hour criterion for employment could be considered as contradictory. Ms Benes pointed out that the one-hour criterion served to account for all labour inputs into production, and was not intended to reflect a measure of quality of employment (employment-related income, working time, etc.).
- 18.** Distinguishing forms of work based on their remuneration or lack thereof was considered more objective and it was suggested that the purpose of generating an income should take precedence over all other purposes. Ms Benes explained that the rationale of the “main purpose” criterion was not a function of an individual’s decision to engage in one form of work or another, but rather a characteristic associated with the function of a job in society or the economy as a whole. It set the conceptual basis by which persons performing productive activities in similar settings, in this case for the acquisition of skills or certification, were grouped together independently of whether they were paid for this activity, unpaid or even required to pay to be allowed to carry it out because of (or based on) differences in national contexts and circumstances.
- 19.** There was support for the proposal to identify own production of goods separately from employment. This was particularly relevant in countries which were agriculturally based, where most persons would be engaged in producing goods for own consumption and

would be classified as employed according to the current standards – thereby portraying a misleading image of full employment. This was clearly not useful for employment and labour market policy formulation. In contrast, some concern was voiced about the lack of historical continuity of employment statistics if own production workers were to be treated as a separate group from those in employment.

20. Regarding the labour underutilization measures, clarification was sought as to whether or not inadequate employment indicators had not been dealt with because of lack of resources or due to prioritization of other topics. Inadequate employment based on skills mismatch, low income and/or excessive hours was considered more sensitive than unemployment and time-related underemployment in certain country settings, and deserved further discussion in this Meeting.
21. Regarding other forms of work, such as state-mandated work, clarification was requested as to whether or not it was part of the proposed framework and regarding its definition and coverage. In particular there was a need for clarity on whether it covered, for example, prison labour, court-imposed work, forced labour, work in order to maintain unemployment benefits, or unpaid work required for obtaining certification. Ms Benes responded that, although less developed, this form of work was included in the framework and welcomed recommendations from the Meeting regarding its coverage. The framework also foresaw the possible inclusion of other new forms of work that might develop in the future.
22. The phenomenon of persons delaying entry into the labour market through prolonged education could be considered as relevant for the future standards because of its important policy and planning implications. Ms Benes referred to the recommendations in the proposal regarding the measurement of labour flows and longitudinal analysis using sub-panels for labour market analysis that would enable identification of such situations.

2.2. Objectives, conceptual framework, units

23. In introducing this agenda item, Ms Benes reiterated the three core measurement objectives of statistics of work and the labour force. These were: monitoring labour markets and labour underutilization; comprehensive measurement of participation in all productive activities; and monitoring participation in different forms of work among subgroups and the relationship between different forms of work and outcomes. She noted that the draft resolution proposed the first international statistical definition of work and sought advice on whether or not this definition needed further elaboration. The framework for work statistics identified various forms of work based on the main purpose of the activity while retaining coherence with the SNA. Two principal observation units for works statistics were defined – the person and the job.
24. In general, the experts were in favour of the framework and general approach. They noted that some elements of it were highly innovative. In order to ensure that all forms of work were included exhaustively in the framework, the experts suggested the inclusion of a category: “other” forms of work. It was also felt that there was a need for more guidance on what was to be included in state-mandated work, especially with respect to the treatment of work required to qualify for continued receipt of government benefits, such as “work for the dole” schemes.
25. Many of the experts were concerned that defining forms of work based on the purpose of the activity alone did not always lead to the most appropriate outcome. This was a particular concern with respect to the treatment of paid apprentices, trainees and interns, who would no longer be classified as employed according to the draft resolution. This was seen as highly problematic for more developed countries with well-established

apprenticeship systems which provided participants with appropriate remuneration and a long-term employment contract. Many young people seeking employment in these countries would in fact be seeking an apprenticeship. In many developing countries, however, trainees and apprentices received no remuneration and may not be offered employment following completion of the training. It was felt that this concern could be addressed by including payment alongside purpose, in order to distinguish between certain forms of work, or by prioritizing employment over trainee work, where activities had characteristics of both forms of work. Ms Benes acknowledged these concerns, while pointing out that giving a higher priority to payment in differentiating between forms of work within the framework may introduce further problems and could have implications for the treatment of forms of work other than trainee work. She stressed the importance of identifying groups that were of particular policy concern, such as paid and unpaid interns, but were currently invisible in most of the statistics. In this regard, some experts pointed out that additional information on trainees could be collected without changing the current definition of employment (see also paragraph 81).

26. The extension of the concept of “job” to cover all forms of work was seen as problematical, primarily from a terminological point of view. It was felt that the distinction between “job” and “employment” was already difficult for users of the statistics to understand, and that extending the concept of job beyond employment would make this more difficult. There was agreement that there was a need to revisit the terminology, perhaps by restricting the term “job” to employment and by identifying a separate term to refer to the statistical unit of interest. The need to have a common statistical unit referring to a “set of tasks and duties performed, or meant to be performed, by one person for a single economic unit” and applicable to all forms of work was nevertheless seen as useful. It was suggested, however, to clarify that the economic unit in the case of self-employment was the unit producing the good or providing the service, independent of the number of clients catered to.
27. There was a need for further clarification in the report and in the resolution of the reasons for allowing the identification of multiple jobs in forms of work other than employment, and that statistics on multiple job-holding would apply only within a single form of work. Ms Benes explained that information on multiple job-holding in each form of work was needed both for national accounts purposes and to inform social policy. While it was true that, in order to estimate total volume of work, there was no need to determine how many hours were spent in, for example, different volunteer jobs, such information was needed for analysis of the contribution of each job to different industries and institutional sectors.
28. Some experts also saw the need to include an additional classification of persons by main activity status across all forms of work. Since the main purpose of such a classification would be to facilitate social analysis, it would best be measured based on self-perception and not on other criteria such as total working time in each form of work.

2.3. Coverage

29. Ms Benes explained that the draft resolution provided guidelines on population coverage and age coverage for labour statistics. She explained the rationale for the use of a “resident population” in labour force and other work statistics and of a “domestic population”, which could include residents of other territories, for use in national production statistics. A lower age boundary, based on the minimum age for employment or of compulsory schooling, whichever was lower, was proposed in order to ensure coverage of age groups in transition from school to employment. There was also a need to set this boundary in relation to a national programme of child labour statistics, if any. No upper age boundary was proposed in order to ensure coverage of age groups in transition from employment to retirement and other productive activities.

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- 30.** The experts were in general agreement with the distinction between the resident and domestic populations for different purposes, noting that statistics on the former would primarily be collected via household surveys and that establishment surveys could not generally separately identify workers who were resident outside the national territory. It was stressed that unemployed persons seeking employment outside their country of residence, should be counted as unemployed in the territory of residence, but that in some circumstances it would be useful to provide additional information about this group, such as why they sought employment abroad.
 - 31.** Workers who were normally resident in one territory and employed in another territory presented particular measurement problems as they were likely to be excluded from coverage and, when included, it was often not possible to collect detailed information regarding the characteristics of their employment, including working conditions, through proxy respondents. Such problems could impact the representativeness of labour force statistics, especially when these represented significant proportions of either the resident population or of the population employed in a particular territory. Special data collection mechanisms, adapted to suit varying national circumstances, were needed to capture those groups.
 - 32.** There was broad agreement with the proposal concerning the minimum age boundary, and recognition that it was not possible to establish a specific age cut-off for national circumstances due to variations in national laws on minimum age for schooling and for employment. It was felt, however, that there was a need for specific mention of legislation on child labour and that there was a need to make the link with recommendations on child labour statistics more coherent. Some experts stressed that the minimum age chosen should not be higher than 15 years, as recommended for international reporting, while recognizing that in some countries the minimum legal age for employment may be higher than this.
 - 33.** The experts did not recommend the production of statistics on labour underutilization for those below the minimum age for employment or compulsory education. While the experts were supportive of the proposal not to impose an upper age limit, some experts doubted the utility of statistics on underutilization for those beyond the normal retirement age. In general, it was felt that these concerns could be addressed by strengthening the recommendations on breakdown by age in the section of the report dealing with derived measures, indicators, tabulations and classifications.
 - 34.** There was a need for more guidance on the treatment of specific population groups, including employees of international organizations and members of the armed forces. Many of the experts felt that members of the armed forces should be included, as they received a salary for providing defence services and made a significant contribution to national production. Some experts were concerned, however, about the practical difficulties of measuring this group in household-based surveys particularly in view of problems of data collection. One expert considered that the armed forces were not subject to labour market mechanisms and thus could lead to potential distortions of the unemployment rate, for example, when including the armed forces stationed overseas.
 - 35.** There was also a need for the draft resolution to mention the need to check coverage levels for specific population groups on a periodic basis, and publish this information alongside the survey results. Ms Benes suggested that this could be incorporated in the section on evaluation.

2.4. Employment

- 36.** In describing the main issues concerning the proposed definition of employment, Ms Benes provided several clarifications regarding the one-hour criterion and its application as a basis for the measurement of employment and, in fact, of each of the other forms of work, within the overall framework. This one-hour threshold was necessary in order to capture all contributions to productive activity and to compute labour input, including not only from core employment situations but also from all of the short-time, casual and sporadic activities that persons engaged in. Regarding employment, she explained that the proportion of persons reporting less than ten hours was generally small in countries reviewed and that this had a limited impact on unemployment rates in most countries, where the unemployment rate increased by less than one percentage point. The one-hour criterion was also particularly useful to ensure proper measurement of own production work and volunteer work because many persons engaged in only a few hours of such work during a short reference period. To show these results, the statistics on employment and on other forms of work would need to be classified according to short hour bands. It was intended that the proposal deal with this issue of classification according to specified hour bands under the section on tabulations and classifications.
- 37.** She then described the features of the proposed concept and its operational definition. She explained that the proposed definition focused on work whose main purpose was to generate income and was not dependent on status in employment categories. It retained reference to persons at work, and persons not at work during the reference period. For this latter group, simplified guidance was provided to assess temporary absence based on specific reasons of absence or short duration (generally of less than three months). Specific reasons proposed as valid temporary absences while maintaining inclusion in employment, regardless of duration, related to: own illness or injury, holiday, vacation or annual leave, (statutory) maternity leave and paternity leave. For all other reasons it was proposed to use a duration limit, generally of less than three months, based on accrued duration (that is, from the start of the absence up to the reference period of measurement). The proposal did not retain use of payment as a condition of job attachment given that it was not applicable in all settings, in particular where informal employment was commonplace. This treatment of persons absent from employment was a response to the call from countries to simplify the set of criteria required to implement it.
- 38.** The proposal excluded persons absent for longer than the recommended duration of three months for reasons other than those stated, given that employment was meant as a current measure over a short reference period. This might relate to persons who did not work because of indefinite layoff, or during an off season. Nevertheless, countries could identify persons on such extended absences by type of reason, according to their national context, although these should not be treated within employment.
- 39.** Ms Benes further explained that the resolution highlighted the inclusion of specific groups of workers considered problematic in previous international standards and for whom a specific statement was required. These included: contributing family workers who worked at least one hour; assisting family members (that is, who helped household members to fulfil their paid employee activities); persons in employment promotion programmes (unless they were in skill/training development programmes); persons on training required by their jobs; and persons not at work because of working-time arrangements.
- 40.** In the discussion that followed, the one-hour criterion received strong support from the majority of experts because it was considered objective, it had a strong conceptual basis that allowed for calculation of coherent productivity measures and facilitated international comparability, particularly of unemployment rates between countries. Any other criterion was arbitrary. It could be applied to all forms of work, although forms of work other than employment might require a shorter reference period of measurement. Ms Benes therefore

noted that the resolution could allow for shorter time units in relation to different sources and reference periods. It was also important to capture those who only worked for a few hours, even if they were not a large proportion of the employed, so as to be able to study whether they wanted to work additional hours or sought another job. Other experts, however, thought that the one-hour criterion was not enough to describe the labour market situation as understood by the public, and continued to challenge its capacity to portray labour markets, time-related underemployment and situations of labour underutilization. Therefore if it were retained, the resolution would need to explicitly require tabulations using five-hour bands so as to shed light on the incidence of extreme employment conditions, as long as the information was reliable.

41. The concern was raised by a number of experts as to whether or not the one-hour criterion should take precedence over the main purpose of the activity, in the sense that one hour of paid activity would always count as employment even if within another form of work, for example, a subsistence job or a trainee job. Indeed, based on the main purpose of generating an income, employment should cover all activities that occurred for that purpose. Therefore the treatment of persons in own production work and trainee work who also generated income seemed contradictory in the proposal. It was suggested that this contradiction might be resolved by distinguishing income as a result of employment, from symbolic income.
42. Regarding persons not at work, many experts expressed their support for the proposal, which removed payment as a condition for inclusion in employment because it did not apply to all, for example, informal sector workers. However, there was some concern that if the main purpose of employment was to generate income, not using payment as a criterion of continued attachment to employment seemed contradictory.
43. Regarding specific reasons for absence, experts noted that occupational injuries should be treated similarly to own illness and injury. Some experts, however, considered that these reasons should be tested for duration as they could relate to absences longer than three months, while others thought they should be treated directly as short-term, without applying a duration limit. It was also noted that some types of absence, for example, those due to reduction in economic activity, lack of clients, slack work, temporary layoff, disorganization or suspension of work, were not treated as valid reasons for absence from employment in some countries, even if a duration limit were applied, whereas they were considered relevant in other countries.
44. Experts agreed that, conceptually, the best criterion to use for duration of absence would be the total duration. However, in many circumstances, especially among persons in informal employment, it was not possible to know or estimate this. For that reason, it was accepted that accrued or elapsed duration of absence, understood as the duration of the absence since its beginning and up to the reference period, may be used for the operational definition.
45. Some experts thought that no duration criterion should be used to qualify for employment, as there were persons absent for long periods who retained an assurance of return to work. Such was the case of teachers during the vacation period, persons on maternity leave, sabbatical leave, paid paternal leave, long service leave and even short-time schemes. This implied the need for a distinction between expectation of a return to work, and assurance of a return to work. Other experts thought that the issue related rather to whether persons had withdrawn from the labour market or not, and welcomed a limitation based on statutory periods. Therefore, elapsed duration would depend on national circumstances for each reason of absence separately.

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46. It was suggested that a refinement in the filter hierarchy could be introduced, for all reasons of absence other than those not already identified as implying an assurance of return to work, so that payment be required, and otherwise, elapsed duration of absence.
 47. In addition, some experts requested introducing in the revised standards more detailed guidance on the treatment of emerging working-time arrangements that could result in a prolonged absence from employment, such as long-term time accounts and hours banking.
 48. An inconsistency was identified regarding the different treatment of seasonal workers during the off season. According to the proposal, they would be considered not in employment even if absent for only one day instead of being treated in the same way as other persons absent from employment, who could be absent for up to three months.
 49. Ms Benes noted the need to review the list of reasons provided in the proposal, the terminology used (for example, short-term versus temporary absence, expected or assured return to work) as well as the inconsistent treatment of certain groups of workers (for example, seasonal workers). Regarding the payment criterion for inclusion in employment, she reminded the Meeting that the main purpose of employment was to generate income and that this did not necessarily require the receipt of concrete payment during the reference period.
 50. A number of experts were of the opinion that workers on employment-promotion-type schemes, including those for training, should not be classified as employed because to be considered for such schemes they would have had to be unemployed. Other experts thought they should be included in employment, because of their participation in production and receipt of payment and because such programmes helped persons to integrate in to the labour market eventually. It was also important to enable the assessment of the efficiency of such programmes (in different sectors) to create employment. However, it was questioned whether persons who were obliged to work in order to continue to receive social benefits should be included in employment, or in another form of work, namely state-mandated work. In defining employment as a form of work whose main purpose was to generate income, some experts thought that the resolution might need to distinguish between income directly accrued from employment, such as the earnings received from an employer or the profits made in a business as compared to income received directly (or indirectly) in the form of a government transfer.
 51. On the issue of contributing family workers, most experts agreed that they should be retained in employment if working during the reference period for at least one hour; if they did not work, they were not in employment. The relative importance of this group could be seen as a function of the national setting and/or of the measurement algorithms. Regardless of those differences, in many countries their contribution to production was significant and in times of crisis their numbers had been observed to increase. It was suggested that in defining this group the resolution should refer to existing international standards (that is, the International Classification of Status in Employment). Ms Benes pointed out, however, that this was referred to in the preamble of the proposed resolution and would most likely be subject to revision.

2.5. Own production work

52. In presenting the proposals for own production work, Ms Benes stressed the importance of a distinction between producers of goods mainly for own consumption and those producing mainly to generate income, so that policies could be designed for each form of work. This distinction would support the identification of subsistence households and of subsistence workers and allow examination of the contribution of own production work to household material welfare, household income and well-being. She outlined the

operational definition of own production work and explained the boundaries between production of goods and services for the market (to generate income) and production of goods and services for own consumption. She highlighted that the proposal distinguished between the own production of goods (which is within the SNA production boundary) and the own production of services. She explained that they were given equal importance and described their components and scopes. Finally she presented operational guidelines for measuring this form of work and asked the Meeting for feedback on the proposals.

- 53.** The experts highlighted the need for precision about the criteria to be used regarding the distinction between production for own consumption and production for the market, especially for production of goods. Some experts pointed out that in most, if not all, cases of own production work, at least part of the production was intended for the market and that even production for own consumption could be considered as generating income in-kind. It was noted that the definition of own production work to provide services was so comprehensive that practically everyone would be engaged in this form of work for some of their time. Clarification was required regarding the interpretation of “main purpose of production”; whether it should be measured in terms of time allocated or in terms of intended use. It was also necessary to make it explicit that, once a productive activity had been identified as mainly for own consumption, it could not be classified as employment, even if some of the goods produced may eventually be sold on the market.
- 54.** The concept of job in this form of work (and in all other forms of work) was understood as a set of related tasks. It was not intended that only one task or condition be used to characterize it and therefore determine its classification as one or another form of work. Therefore, for example, the receipt of some token payment as part of a volunteer job or the barter of some goods produced in an own production job would not warrant a change in their classification from volunteer work or own production work to employment.
- 55.** Several participants stressed the importance of providing separate statistics on own production work and employment. In countries where large parts of the population were dependent on subsistence agriculture for survival, counting this form of work as employment, as specified in the current standards, did not provide statistics that were useful either to monitor employment-creation programmes or to develop poverty-eradication strategies. In many low-income countries, this approach led to very low unemployment rates that did not respond to changes in economic conditions despite very limited opportunities for income-generating employment. A number of participants pointed to the usefulness of collecting information on working time in own production work, as a measure of national production and productivity.
- 56.** Experience in a number of developing countries showed that members of households could reliably state whether the main aim of production was to produce goods for own consumption, even when a surplus might regularly be taken to the market. It was concluded that the self-perceived intended purpose of the production of goods should be used as a criterion for separately identifying own production of goods from employment. It was agreed that there was a need to improve the clarity of the definitions and operational guidelines, especially with respect to the boundary between market and non-market production.
- 57.** Given that most of the own production work was done at the household level, where all household members participated in production, guidelines were needed in order to identify those involved in market production and those involved in production for own use. There were particular difficulties where one part of the household’s land was devoted to market production (such as a banana plantation) and another part was devoted to own production of goods (such as beans), as most household members would work in both types of production. There was a need for further conceptual and methodological development to

deal with such cases and to provide guidelines related to the economic unit when both market-oriented production and production for own consumption was taking place.

58. Suggestions for improving terminology were also made. Given the fact that some products may not be consumed, it was suggested to replace “production for own consumption” with “production for own use”, for example. Similarly, it was pointed out that the term “own production” may be misleading and that “own-use production” may be preferable as a concise term for this form of work. More generally, one proposal put forth to distinguish between the different forms of work involved using first the “main purpose of the activity” to separate own production work from employment to generate income, and then “payment” to distinguish between employment and other forms of work.
59. In responding to this discussion, Ms Benes agreed that there was a need to improve clarity on the application of the one-hour criterion when own production work was involved and to develop further operational guidelines based on national experiences. A key aim was to capture persons who were not integrated into market activity. There was also a need for clearer guidelines for persons engaged in more than one form of work during the reference period.

2.6. Volunteer work and other forms of work

60. Ms Benes explained that the proposals relating to volunteer work built on ILO work presented to and agreed by the 18th ICLS. This work did not, however, have the status of an international standard adopted through an ICLS resolution. It was published in the ILO *Manual on the measurement of volunteer work* released in 2011. Key defining characteristics for the measurement of volunteer work were that it: (1) was unpaid, although participants may receive reimbursement for out-of pocket expenses, a stipend to cover living expenses and/or in-kind compensation such as meals, transport, symbolic gifts; (2) was non-compulsory, without legal or other obligation; (3) involved work for at least one hour in the reference period; and (4) had the main purpose of benefiting other units including the worker’s own community or association. A category for state-mandated work had also been proposed. This could include legislated community service, prison work when mandated and unpaid, and possibly work mandated by the State to continue receiving social benefits. She sought advice on whether there were other forms of work not yet included in the framework and for advice on the need to define both state-mandated work and other forms of work within the framework.
61. Volunteer work could be undertaken either through or for market or non-market enterprises, or directly for households that produce goods for own consumption and services for own consumption. It excluded activities performed only for one’s own household, court-mandated community service, work mandated as part of a prison sentence, alternative military service and unpaid service required as part of education/training.
62. Some experts expressed concerns that the scope of volunteer work as presented in the proposal was too broad, as it included activities that could simply be seen as being a good neighbour, and that the measurement of this form of work should be restricted to that conducted through or for organizations. This might lead to more reliable statistics that were well aligned to both public perceptions of volunteering and government policies related to volunteering. Other experts pointed out that, in many countries, volunteering through organizations was rare while volunteer work in the form of direct assistance to neighbours and the community was very important. It was felt that excluding informal unpaid work of this nature from volunteer work and including it in, for example, a residual category would not do justice to its importance to society and as an input to national

production. It was also important to retain a clear separation between volunteer work and state-mandated work or other forms of community service obligation.

63. It was proposed that subcategories could be provided within the framework to allow volunteer work through organizations to be identified separately from direct (or informal) volunteer work. Depending on national circumstances, statistics on each subcategory could be collected with differing frequencies and potentially from different data sources.
64. There was a range of national practices with respect to the frequency and data sources used for compilation of statistics on volunteering and on other forms of work. In one country the labour force survey had been revised so that statistics were compiled on employment and trainee work on a quarterly basis and on own production, volunteer work, care for the elderly and household services on an annual basis. In some countries a module on volunteering was included on a periodic basis in the labour force survey, while in others the time use survey was the principal source. Establishment surveys were not, at present, a good source for statistics on volunteer work as many institutions that engaged volunteers did not retain payroll or other records for them. However, they could become a potential source, should there be interest in keeping records of volunteer workers.
65. A concern was expressed that the non-compulsory nature of volunteer work was not always clear cut if, for example, undertaking volunteer work was a requirement for graduation from an educational institution. Ms Benes deemed that if the activity was carried out in order to fulfil a requirement for graduation, it should be treated as trainee work within the proposed framework.
66. The reason for the distinction between volunteer work performed directly for households producing goods for own consumption and those producing services for own consumption was questioned. Ms Benes explained that this was included so as to allow for the production of statistics on volunteering both within and beyond the production boundary in the SNA. Some experts further indicated that the terminology used by national accounts to describe these two components of volunteer work was confusing and suggested instead using expressions that were more compatible with labour statistics.
67. Several experts felt that using the term “job” to refer to volunteer work was not appropriate and inconsistent with normal usage of this term, especially when it related to the provision of informal voluntary assistance to the community or to neighbours. Other experts indicated, however, that persons who were exclusively engaged in volunteer work did tend to refer to such an activity as a volunteer job, and thus, in those cases, the use of the term “job” seemed appropriate. Ms Benes acknowledged that there was a need to look again at options for the terminology used to refer to the unit of observation for volunteer work and for other forms of work.
68. It was agreed that there was a need to clarify that contributing family workers were not to be included in volunteer work and that volunteer work may be undertaken through or for the benefit of religious organizations.
69. A number of experts indicated that there was a need for guidelines to clarify the boundary between employment and volunteer work to deal, for example, with cases where participants received reimbursement for costs, health benefits, stipends and accident compensation. Ms Benes agreed that further clarification was needed and noted that volunteers may receive some kinds of compensation if it was not in the nature of a salary or lump sum, but rather intended to cover costs. Workers engaged by UN Volunteers, for example, received a stipend or lump sum that was considered as remuneration and were counted as employed, even though the activity was referred to as volunteering.

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- 70.** Experts stressed the need to avoid confusion in cases where workers were engaged in both employment and volunteer work through the same organization. There was particular concern to ensure that there was a clear boundary between volunteer work and unpaid overtime. Ms Benes agreed that extra hours that are unpaid should not be counted as voluntary work but indicated that genuine private-sector volunteering could take place. For example, in cases cell phones were distributed by a private sector agency during a civil emergency, many of the volunteers would also be employees of the agency. If an employee is remunerated by the company to do emergency work it should be counted as employment but if the work is totally voluntary it should be counted as volunteering.
- 71.** With respect to state-mandated work and other forms of work that have not yet been clearly elaborated, it was proposed that a single residual category could be created and defined as including the various forms of state-mandated work, work required to continue to receive social benefits, and other activities defined as work but not included in any of the other forms of work.

2.7. Trainee work

- 72.** Ms Benes provided background to some of the reasons why the Office was proposing to measure trainee work as a separate form of work. In the more developed countries strong partnerships between the educational system, government and employers had created programmes for apprenticeships that, even if providing lower than occupational salaries, were nonetheless very formalized. In contrast, in less developed countries, similar types of trainee activities or forms of work to provide skills to develop and integrate the future work force were much less formal, providing little payment in cash or in-kind and possibly even requiring payment for the apprenticeship. However, other types of workplace experience, such as unpaid internships and some traineeships that were not so structured or oriented towards formal working conditions, existed and were possibly growing in magnitude in all areas of the world. In some countries, certain highly skilled occupations (medical doctors, teachers) also required long, unpaid traineeships or internships prior to achieving full certification to practise without supervision. It was seen that national practice for the treatment of trainee work was diverse and statistics were not readily available.
- 73.** An ILO Employment Sector study in two districts of Tanzania had illustrated that over 50 per cent of informal apprenticeships either received no remuneration or only some in-kind support, while over 70 per cent paid some fees to be involved in apprentice work. Concern about these types of jobs was present in the European Union as well, where there were also paid and unpaid trainee work programmes of different durations and statisticians were looking for a way to collect information in surveys and to study them as an analytical group.
- 74.** In the proposed framework, trainee work referred to work carried out by apprentices, trainees, interns and the like, with the main purpose of acquiring skills. This enabled the identification of persons in transition from education to the labour market and their impact on labour market dynamics. This did not mean that other forms of work, for example, volunteer work and own production work had no effect on labour markets; rather that trainee work was a form of work that governments focused on to help, through specific measures and policies, to improve the future workforce. The scope of trainee work included job training and re-training schemes when producing goods and services. It excluded on-the-job training activities as part of a person's ongoing employment, probationary periods on taking up employment, and any training of contributing family workers, even if they were learning skills in the process of their contribution to production. Similarly trainee work did not comprise volunteers learning skills while volunteering.

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75. Ms Benes next identified two other possible approaches to classify trainees in the revised standards. The first approach was to include only paid trainees in employment. This would require a priority rule to give precedence to generating an income over other main purposes. Guidelines would need to be provided to adequately identify unpaid trainee jobs separately from paid trainee jobs. The contradiction of including contributing family workers with no direct generation of income as in employment would become more evident and would need to be resolved. Such an approach would imply differential treatment to similar training activities, depending on the national context, which would increase the existing incomparability across countries. If only trainee work statistics based on pay were collected, this would hinder the development of comprehensive policies for different population subgroups. Furthermore, this alternative would require defining: what pay is; whether it included, and how to distinguish, payments other than from employers; stipends; token or symbolic pay; or in-kind payments. This alternative could also have implications for defining other forms of work that may generate income, such as volunteer jobs compensated in cash or in-kind, and own production work that sold something in the market.
76. The second approach was to include all paid, unpaid and paying trainee jobs in employment. This would require justifying training as a form of remuneration, as noted in the Resolution concerning the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93) adopted by the 15th ICLS. It would also suggest the need to distinguish a new status in employment categories for paid and unpaid training and revise the current standards on employment related income, to cover situations of payment in services such as training. This approach would be inconsistent with the ILO Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95), that stipulated that in-kind payments should not represent the totality of wages received.
77. The Meeting in general recognized the existence of trainee work as a particular form of work and the need for statistics on this group of workers in order to inform policy. A main debate, however, was whether this group of workers, as a whole or only some subgroups, should be measured within or outside employment.
78. Some experts were of the opinion that paid trainee work had characteristics that made it closer to employment. In countries with established formal systems, apprentices and trainees received a wage that was generally lower than a fully qualified employee, just as an entry-level employee would. They held a contract stipulating their working conditions and entitlements, social security coverage, etc. The main difference from paid employees was that, while working in the enterprise, apprentices were also completing a qualification. Similarly, in certain contexts, qualified medical doctors who were also undertaking post-basic training as specialist medical practitioners, generally did so as part of their paid employment. As labour market policies targeted the employed, it would be meaningless not to include these types of situations in employment. Likewise, policies promoting school–work transition focused on combining training with employment experience. Their treatment outside employment would thus not be consistent with policy.
79. Experts who considered that paid trainee work should be included in employment, also pointed out that historical continuity in the employment, unemployment and labour force series was desirable, as they remained the key indicators describing the labour market. They noted that the paid/unpaid operationalization to distinguish between forms of work was more straightforward. It established a complete coherence with the operational definition of employment in the proposal, by including not only trainees who received an income, but also persons in any other form of work who generated an income for at least one hour. Many paid trainees integrated in enterprises not only received a salary but enjoyed labour benefits and union representation; their exclusion from employment would introduce discrimination. Another possibility proposed would be to establish a set of rules giving priority to production of goods for own use, based on the intended destination of the

production, over receipt of remuneration and then to receipt of remuneration over training or volunteering. Such an approach would allow each job or productive activity to be counted only once in the framework; thus identifying first those activities to be treated as own production work, second those to be treated as employment, third those to be treated as trainee work and finally those to be treated as volunteer work.

- 80.** It was also noted that labour force surveys could investigate the incidence of unpaid trainee work, as a separate form of work, on a less frequent basis. In this context it was considered clearly necessary that the distinction between symbolic pay and employment-related income would have to be left up to countries to determine according to national circumstances. Some experts also considered that paid trainees had to be paid by the employer and not by a social security scheme to qualify for inclusion in employment.
- 81.** Other experts expressed concern over using a distinction based on payment. It was very difficult to draw the line between paid and unpaid trainee work in countries where payment was not regulated, could be exclusively in-kind or seen as a contribution or help and given only sporadically. Basing the identification of trainee workers solely on whether they received payment would lead to wrongly classifying as in employment the common case of trainees who were paid but did not yet produce goods or services because they were still learning. Rather, a few experts thought that the proposal to identify all trainee workers separately from employment using a building block approach enabled a more integrated treatment of this form of work as a whole and also allowed their aggregation to maintain comparability with the past. It could guarantee comparable treatment across countries, independently of the kind of training programmes and contexts.
- 82.** Those who considered that all types of trainee work should be included in employment argued that all trainee workers, whether paid or unpaid, put pressure on the labour market. In addition, unpaid trainees were common in many countries and if treated differently than paid trainees they ran the risk of being ignored for policy purposes. Paid trainee programmes were often biased towards formal sector skilled occupations but governments needed to focus also on populations involved in informal programmes, to find income-generating activities for them. This bias perpetuated a lack of support to those who needed help the most.
- 83.** Alternative approaches were also proposed in the Meeting. One was independent of the payment criterion, based on the extent to which each form of work involved labour market transactions. Own production work or volunteer work did not involve labour market transactions, whereas the types of trainee work that did would need to be included in employment. Another approach used two parallel frameworks: one based on main purpose as proposed, and the other based on an understanding of employment as paid work; that is, dependent on payment and the one-hour criterion.
- 84.** An inconsistency in the report regarding the capacity of establishment surveys to provide information about trainee workers was raised; clarification was given that if such workers were considered as formal employees by the enterprise, then they could be identified through the survey.
- 85.** A number of experts questioned the different treatment of, and possibility of distinguishing between, training activities that were undertaken by persons in household enterprises owned by a household member (in the proposal, contributing family workers) and training activities of workers in household enterprises owned by non-household members (in the proposal, trainee workers). They considered that both types of worker should be considered as trainees. Ms Benes explained that the reason for such treatment was based on the idea that in all jobs there was a training element, while the main purpose of jobs of contributing family members was to generate an income for the household enterprise, rather than to acquire skills.

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86. As was made evident from the wealth of discussion on this complex topic, Ms Benes concluded that the distinction between paid and unpaid trainee work was not simple and that classifying trainees in employment on this basis would have implications on other forms of work. She noted that since the proposal was not focused on alignment with the SNA, perhaps a way forward was to raise labour market work to a more prominent level as compared to the conventional measure of the labour force, accompanied by adequate additional indicators of labour underutilization, to be developed.

2.8. Labour underutilization: Time-related underemployment

87. In introducing this session, Ms Benes highlighted the need to supplement the unemployment rate with additional measures of labour underutilization that could provide more information for purposes of labour market monitoring and assessing the pressure on the labour market. She provided background information about the work, including the resolution adopted by the 18th ICLS to develop measures of labour underutilization as part of the measurement of decent work, focusing on mismatches between labour supply and demand including components for labour slack, low earnings and skills underutilization. She also referred to the follow-up technical workshop in 2009 and the meeting of the Working Group for the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics in 2011.
88. She noted that the 2009 ILO technical workshop on labour underutilization had recommended that the scope of labour underutilization measures be reduced to focus on problems of quantity rather than quality of employment and avoid overlaps with decent work and quality of employment indicator frameworks. Labour slack was seen as being within the scope of the work. Skills underutilization was considered to present difficult measurement and interpretation problems and was being developed as part of the work on quality of employment indicators (per cent of employed persons who have more education than is normally required in their occupation). Low earnings was considered to be not so much an issue of underutilization but of undervalued labour and was being addressed as part of the development of decent work indicators for adequate income (low-pay rate). Therefore, it had concluded that the proposed measures of skills underutilization and low earnings were faced with considerable measurement problems rendering them ineffective as tools for informed policy development or monitoring. Skills underutilization was based on broad skill levels, and therefore mainly captured broad mismatches among skilled workers, while low earnings usually covered a small proportion of all workers.
89. Further assessment about the limitations of the unemployment rate as a measure of overall labour market performance had also made evident the need to review the concept of employment, which, as defined in relation to the production boundary of the SNA, included a broader group of workers than those targeted by employment and related labour market policies. The proposed new framework for work statistics which included a more focused concept of employment to generate income, thus also aimed to contribute to improving the relevance of the unemployment rate as an indicator of overall labour market performance.
90. The proposal in the draft resolution thus focused on the time-related component of labour underutilization (labour slack) requested by the 18th ICLS. It was proposed to define the scope of labour underutilization to cover those in time-related underemployment, the unemployed and persons marginally attached to the labour force. Other possible measures that could be considered within the scope of labour underutilization were: a measure that targeted the self-employed with low levels of market-oriented activity, as these workers might not reduce their working time during slack periods; a measure of employed persons who sought another job in employment, as they put pressure on the labour market but not

necessarily due to reduced working time (currently covered by the measures of inadequate employment situations adopted by the 16th ICLS); other measures that targeted other dimensions, such as workers in low-productivity jobs; workers who migrated to work overseas; and measures related to particular forms of work, such as own producers of goods for subsistence, and unpaid and paying trainees.

- 91.** She stressed that the guidelines for the measurement of time-related underemployment were based on the recommendations included in the 16th ICLS resolution on this topic and that the only purpose of the changes proposed was to improve the clarity of the recommendations. It was proposed to include this indicator as one of the headline indicators related to the labour market.
- 92.** The Meeting was asked for advice on the following issues:
- terminology (“labour underutilization” v. “unmet need for employment”);
 - clarity of the revised guidelines on time-related underemployment;
 - the need for an hours threshold for defining time-related underemployment;
 - the need for additional measures of general labour market pressure (for example, for persons in employment seeking other/additional employment).
- 93.** Before discussing the issues related to time-related underemployment it was proposed and agreed to discuss wider issues about the scope of the measures of labour underutilization to be proposed to the 19th ICLS. It was stressed that an underutilization measure that did not cover skills underutilization and/or persons with low earnings would not provide a comprehensive picture of the mismatches between supply and demand; nor would it provide the level of detail needed to assess the effectiveness of policies implemented. The work to develop indicator sets was not seen as a substitute for detailed work on measurement of these concepts for consideration and adoption by the ICLS. There was a need, at the least, for the report to the 19th ICLS to describe the work carried out on the measurement of skills underutilization and low earnings.
- 94.** It was also felt by some experts that, in order to be consistent with the definition of employment defined as income generating activity in the proposal for a draft resolution, it was essential to include persons with low pay, including those with excessive hours of work, within the scope of the labour underutilization. Many experts emphasized that the unemployment rate was not sufficiently robust to show changes in the labour market, especially in less developed countries where the unemployment rate did not change in response to economic downturns but there were changes in working time or shifts from one form of work to another. This implied that the unemployment rate had limited relevance as the main labour market indicator and as an indicator of economic well-being. The need for additional indicators that would reflect the reality of the labour market was stressed.
- 95.** Some experts highlighted the measurement problems they had experienced in attempting to develop measures of skills mismatch in their countries. Others pointed to the fact that low pay could only be measured effectively for wage earners. In many developing countries that would mean leaving out a big part of the labour force. There was agreement that labour slack could be measured without major problems.
- 96.** One expert pointed out that measuring time-related underemployment was just a first step in measuring unmet need for employment that could be gradually expanded to other types of labour underutilization. Such an approach, however, required developing indicators that were additive and, thus, mutually exclusive.

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- 97.** Some experts stressed that further work on the development of a methodology for the measurement of low earnings and skills mismatch was still needed before the 19th ICLS, and could be based on work already done in the context of decent work and quality of employment indicators to provide the basis for its continued development. Ms Benes agreed that there was a need for the Office to report to the ICLS the difficulties that had been encountered in developing measures of skills mismatch and low pay. It was also felt that there was a need for the resolution to identify specifically which decent work indicators might serve to shed light on these issues.
 - 98.** To mitigate some of the measurement problems associated with the various concepts of labour underutilization in collecting data it was suggested that guidelines could be provided on supplementing the quantitative information with some qualitative or subjective questions (for example, “Are you satisfied with the level of activity at your job?”) that could help to identify underutilized workers.
 - 99.** A few experts mentioned their experience with identifying, among the employed, those who sought other employment, by the reasons for seeking employment. This was considered an important indicator in their countries, together with time-related underemployment, because it was very sensitive to economic cycles, which was particularly important in countries where unemployment levels did not change in times of crisis.
 - 100.** Notwithstanding the concerns about the need to better address the measurement of skills mismatch and low pay, the experts strongly supported the development of innovative measures of the quantitative aspects of labour underutilization that were presented in the proposals.
 - 101.** The need to address the issue of own production workers as underutilized workers was also stressed. While some of these workers could be counted as unemployed or marginally attached according to the proposals, in countries where this form of work provided the main livelihood for large sectors of the population, they may not consider the possibility of seeking or being available for employment to generate income. In these cases options could be to count them all as underutilized as a further supplementary measure, or to ask specific survey questions on whether they would want employment to generate income if it was available.
 - 102.** It was also felt that it might be useful to provide a measure of those in “extreme” underutilization. For example, guidelines could be provided on a measure of those who worked less than a specified low threshold but wanted full-time employment, as well as a measure reflecting the volume of additional hours of work sought. Reference could also be made to the usefulness of the compilation of information on volume of time-related underemployment in narrow bands of hours worked (such as five hours).
 - 103.** With respect to time-related underemployment, it was felt that there was an inconsistency between the definition of the concept and the use of a specified hours threshold for measurement. It was possible not to use a threshold, as was done in the Philippines, where statistics were provided for persons who worked above and below 40 hours per week and who wanted to work additional hours. It was noted that some explanation for the reason for using a threshold would be welcome. The applicability of the concept of an hours threshold to the self-employed was also questioned.
 - 104.** Concerning the hours threshold it was pointed out that, although the 16th ICLS left some flexibility to countries in determining the threshold for purposes of international comparability, some common cut-off may be useful. Several experts indicated that there was a need for more guidance on setting thresholds to suit national circumstances and to reflect specific considerations for certain groups or types of work, particularly for women

and for employment in agriculture. For example, in labour-intensive activities, such as some types of agricultural work, it might not be possible to work long hours so there might be a need to set lower thresholds. However, no consensus regarding a common cut-off could be reached. Instead, general guidance promoting the setting of different thresholds based on tests carried out at national level for particular groups and industries could be introduced.

- 105.** Concerning the criteria for defining time-related underemployment, it was noted that a measure based on hours actually worked could provide useful information on short-term trends in underemployment when the reasons for working shorter hours were known to be labour market related. However, to assess structural situations of time-related underemployment a measure based on hours usually worked was more appropriate. While both measures were relevant for monitoring purposes, some experts reported problems with the measurement of time-related underemployment based on hours actually worked. Still, others provided examples that could enable measurement according both to hours usually and actually worked.
- 106.** Some concerns were expressed about the need for guidelines on the treatment of apprentices and trainees in measuring time-related underemployment if they were to be counted as employed. It was also noted that there was a need for flexibility in setting the reference period for the measurement of availability to work additional hours, particularly in situations where a lengthy delay may be required to change from a part-time to a full-time job with a new employer. Ms Benes took note of all comments and highlighted the Office's commitment to address them, as far as possible, in the draft resolution to be submitted for discussion to the 19th ICLS.

2.9. Labour underutilization: Unemployment

- 107.** Ms Benes outlined the main revisions introduced in the draft resolution relating to the measurement of unemployment. In particular, she highlighted the changes related to the concept and operational definition of unemployment, the reference periods of measurement, the measurement criteria related to search and availability for employment, and the treatment of specific groups. Some key proposed changes included the specification of more concrete reference periods of measurement to promote cross-country comparability, removal of the option to relax the seeking employment criterion in light of the introduction of a new measure of "marginal attachment" to the labour force, and revisions to the list of activities to seek employment. The draft resolution also introduced a concept of long-term unemployment defined as "unemployed persons who carried out activities to seek employment during a long reference period, such as six months to one year, as per national circumstances" and the associated concept of duration of unemployment.
- 108.** With respect to the proposal to extend the reference period for availability for taking up employment, in order to eliminate the differential effect on certain population groups, some of the experts were concerned that any movement away from the reference week for measurement would limit the utility of the unemployment rate as a current measure of pressure on the labour market. One expert called the relevance of the availability criterion into question, stressing that it added unnecessary complexity and had limited impact on the measurement of unemployment. From a conceptual point of view, it was also inconsistent as it introduced an imbalance between the approach used to identify persons in employment, who could be temporarily absent in the reference period of measurement, and the stricter approach used to identify the unemployed who had to be available during the same reference period. Several experts supported extending the duration of the availability criterion to one or two weeks following the reference week, as it enabled a more just and realistic outcome for persons with care responsibilities (that affected women especially).

The aim was to retain a current measure that could be applicable in an even way to all subgroups in the population. Other suggestions included making reference to the current point in time, to avoid reference to a situation in the past.

- 109.** Concern was expressed, by several experts, that removal of the option to relax the seeking employment criterion would have a significant impact on time series through decreasing the unemployment rate, especially in countries where there were limited or no opportunities or facilities to seek employment. Such a change could also have political implications, as the unemployment rate was a measure closely monitored by the public, the media and policymakers. Ms Benes reiterated that those excluded from unemployment as a result of this change would be included among the marginally attached and also in the proposed wider labour underutilization rate. In countries where the unemployment rate was low yet marginal attachment was high, this would highlight the lack of opportunities to seek employment. The challenge would be to communicate the nature of the change and to educate all users on the importance of the new measures of underutilization. Publication of parallel series for some time could also be planned to help users understand the impact of breaks in series.
- 110.** Regarding the measurement of search for employment, it was noted that, if survey questions used to identify persons who sought employment were interpreted as referring only to paid employee jobs, a review of these questions would be necessary, so that they would also apply to informal sector jobs, including self-employment.
- 111.** It was noted that it may be useful in the resolution to define the concept of duration of unemployment, before then defining long-term unemployment, which was derived from the duration. The limitations of measuring duration of unemployment could also be highlighted, as it was difficult to assess active job search and availability over a long period of time.
- 112.** It was agreed that the types of employment included within search for employment would need to be extended to include persons looking for paid trainee work, if this type of work was to be counted as employment.

2.10. Labour underutilization: Marginal attachment

- 113.** Ms Benes introduced the new concept of marginal attachment by explaining that it was identified as a new group of persons outside of the labour force who, although they did not seek employment or were not available for employment, nevertheless exerted some pressure on the labour market. Indeed, studies had shown that they tended to be closer to the unemployed than to other persons outside of the labour force. She remarked that a subset of persons in marginal attachment used to fall within the “relaxed” definition of unemployment as defined by the 13th ICLS. Persons in marginal attachment were composed of two groups, namely, persons seeking employment but not available for employment (who tended to be a very small group in most countries) and persons available for employment but not seeking employment, who constituted the bulk of those in marginal attachment. A subgroup of this latter group were the “discouraged workers”, when the reasons for not seeking employment were related to labour market inadequacies, such as because: persons were not able to find suitable employment, they lacked experience or qualifications, there were no jobs in the area or matching their skills, they had recently lost their job; or they were considered too young or too old by potential employers. The proposal did not require any past seeking employment activity because it was felt that including this additional criterion would exclude workers in areas where the labour market was restricted or inadequate.

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- 114.** She also introduced a possible new group in addition to those in marginal attachment, to identify persons who did not seek employment nor were available for employment, but who expressed they wanted to work. This group was particularly meaningful in regions with limited employment opportunities, such as in rural areas, where persons were already fully engaged in other productive activities, such as persons engaged in own production of goods or services, or in relation to people who faced social barriers to labour market entry, often women.
- 115.** Many experts welcomed the inclusion of a definition for marginally attached persons. However, a number of experts considered that it would benefit by being more focused to target more analytically meaningful groups. The proposal currently grouped a heterogeneous set of persons, including for example, students who sought employment but would not be available until a later date. It was reported that the longitudinal behaviours of different subgroups of marginally attached were more unstable than had been hypothesized, so great care was required in formulating questions to capture information on these groups. Other experts indicated producing similar measures on a regular basis and trusted the results. Questions were raised regarding the content of the group, for example, whether it would include persons who had stopped seeking employment because all the available jobs were too low paid, or persons receiving invalidity pensions who satisfied the criteria for inclusion (that is, either sought or were available for employment). Similarly, there was a need to clarify that, in measuring the marginally attached, the same reference periods as used to identify the unemployed should be used, in order to avoid problems of comparability or misclassification.
- 116.** A number of experts mentioned that a subset, or all, of the marginally attached were already measured regularly in their countries as part of their current measure of unemployment. The conditions that justified relaxing the unemployment definition as understood in the current standards (13th ICLS) not only still existed today, but had become worse. They showed some concern that this group was not being considered as within the labour force. They preferred to continue producing a single indicator of unemployment that aggregated unemployment with the marginally attached. At the same time, it was recognized that doing this increased the lack of comparability with other countries producing statistics on unemployment only. It was suggested to not discontinue the measurement of such “relaxed” unemployment, but to measure the strict unemployment in addition.
- 117.** Experience in countries that produced measures of marginal attachment separately from the unemployed, showed that it was advantageous to aggregate the two indicators – not for use as the main or only indicator, but rather as a measure to complement the unemployment rate. In the proposal for headline measures, she agreed that it would not be useful to recommend an excessive number of indicators, but to prioritize two or three to be reported together and regularly, which the public could understand well. Several experts underscored how important it was that the ILO seize this opportunity to serve the less developed countries through a strong statement on the new standards concerning the need for these new, complementary indicators to be produced alongside the conventional labour force indicators, which were of less use to their policy development.
- 118.** Some experts considered that the condition of having sought employment in a previous period was essential to identify discouraged jobseekers, to ensure that workers had, at some time in the past, been full players in the labour market and to make the measure of discouraged jobseekers less volatile.
- 119.** The term “marginally attached” was considered to have a negative connotation, or even to imply lack of serious need when actually they could be even more so, for lack of work. Perhaps other terms could be used, such as “conditional attachment” or “potential labour force”. In French, the term “*lien faible avec le marché de travail*” (weak link with the

labour market) gave the impression that they were removed from the labour market, when in fact the intention was the opposite, so “*lien relâché*” (relaxed link) might be better. Ms Benes reiterated that various terms used in the three official languages of the Meeting, English, French and Spanish, were still not satisfactory and that the Office would be pleased to receive suggestions to take into account. Also, a number of suggestions were advanced to improve specific wording in the proposed draft resolution, for example, to clarify that the reference period for availability for work to define the component groups was based on the same reference period used in the definition of unemployment.

120. Many experts welcomed the proposal to include persons who “want to work” even though they did not seek employment nor were available for employment. It was a group already being used in a number of countries to monitor those outside the labour force. In many countries these were youth, disabled, persons subject to parental authority and women, in particular, who faced many social barriers to employment. Not only did they require permission to work from their husbands or other men in their families, but some potential employers would not hire them at all if they were pregnant. In addition, in rural areas, the few jobs available were usually physically demanding, thus barring women from employment opportunities. This meant that women would not appear as unemployed, and the only way to reflect their labour market circumstances was with such a measure as proposed. Such a measure provided countries with the possibility to identify persons in restricted labour markets, and who faced significant social barriers to work.
121. However, some experts considered that persons who did not seek nor were available for employment but who wanted work, did not exert pressure on the labour market, or in any case, did not exert pressure as strongly as persons in marginal attachment. Hence, while they could be identified as a relevant group for monitoring purposes, they should not be in the same group as the marginally attached, but rather part of another group. The issue was raised regarding the meaning of “wanting” to work, when it was not accompanied by an objective action, and whether it could be interpreted as “needing” to work. As a complement to this group it was also suggested to include a measure capturing all persons who did not want any work. This was an informative measure.
122. The Meeting brought out the need to obtain more information on social barriers faced by different groups of persons, not only for the group of those who “want to work” but also for those in marginal attachment. Ms Benes explained that this had been considered at the beginning of the revision process and had later been introduced as separate classifications based on feedback from the regional consultations. She indicated that there was a need to strengthen the link between the definition of the marginally attached and the proposed classifications of persons outside of the labour force, but that they would be happily reincorporated as they were important to address a number of social and gender concerns.

2.11. Derived measures and indicators

123. Ms Benes presented the proposals concerning derived measures and indicators which highlighted a minimum set in three areas namely, measures and indicators for labour market monitoring, for other forms of work and for labour input for SNA work. The proposals also included recommendations regarding the types of disaggregation for statistical reporting, for example, by sex, age groups, region, etc.
124. The proposed derived measures for labour market monitoring concerned the labour force, persons outside the labour force, the extended labour force, extended unemployment and labour underutilization. Concerning the labour force, it continued to be the sum of the employed and the unemployed population. However, Ms Benes reminded the Meeting that while the terms remained unchanged, the labour force no longer referred to the population furnishing the supply of labour to SNA production, but rather the population furnishing the

supply of labour for jobs that generated income, and that therefore, a measure of “SNA workers” was perhaps required. Persons outside the labour force covered working age persons (that is, above a specified age) who were neither employed nor unemployed. She reminded the Meeting that the term “inactive” population would no longer be used as these persons may also be engaged in at least one other form of work. She raised the issue of whether, given the potential problems of producing estimates for the total population, it would be advisable to remove the age limit for persons outside the labour force. The extended labour force related to the sum of the employed, the unemployed and the marginally attached; extended unemployment was calculated as the sum of the unemployed and the marginally attached; and labour underutilization was the sum of time-related underemployment, of unemployment and of the marginally attached. This was the summary measure that indicated the overall level of labour underutilization in a country.

- 125.** The derived measures for monitoring levels of participation in the various forms of work other than employment related to simple rates of own production of goods, volunteer work, etc., as percentages of the working age population. Derived measures of labour input for SNA production statistics were covered by international statistical standards on working time, adopted by the 18th ICLS.
- 126.** Ms Benes also presented the main indicators for labour market monitoring, many of which were already present in the current resolution adopted by the 13th ICLS (such as the employment to population ratio, the labour force participation rate, the unemployment rate) and others which were new (the long-term unemployment rate and the set of labour underutilization rates). For this last set of indicators, the objective of the proposals was to be flexible in order to allow for different purposes, so that separate indicators were proposed for each of the components of labour underutilization (time-related underemployment, unemployment and marginal attachment) and overlapping measures that aggregated the various components to create increasingly broader groups of underutilized persons.
- 127.** The major issue with these indicators was whether to use a common denominator for each component, such as the labour force, the extended labour force, or to use different denominators for each (that is, the labour force for the time related underemployed and the unemployed, and the extended labour force for the marginally attached). When the labour force was used, the indicator for the marginally attached would be a ratio, whose denominator did not contain the numerator; when the extended labour force was used, the indicators would not be strictly comparable with the unemployment rate. There was no straightforward choice, as each alternative had advantages and disadvantages. Regarding overlapping indicators, she noted that while they did provide information on levels of underutilization for increasingly broader groups, they did not provide information on the relative size of each component nor on their response to labour market changes.
- 128.** The choice of a denominator for the labour underutilization indicators was strongly debated and no clear agreement was reached. A number of experts were of the opinion that using the labour force as the denominator of the marginally attached did not make sense, as the indicator could be larger than one. Therefore, it would be better to use a denominator that contained the numerator, that is, the extended labour force. Other experts thought that the labour force would be a better denominator because it allowed the use of the unemployment rate as the benchmark, against which the other components could be compared. Some experts thought that different denominators should be used for different specific components. Still others favoured the use of the working age population, although it was sensitive to age structure of the population and thus trends in the indicator could be driven by non-labour market issues, it nevertheless had the virtue of simplicity and, of being used as the denominator of the labour force participation rate. Use of a common denominator would enable joint analysis of aggregate labour market indicators including the various indicators of labour underutilization.

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- 129.** A number of suggestions to improve the draft resolution were, for example, the need to provide definitions of first time jobseekers and job losers, mentioned among the indicators. There was also a need to include trainee work as a derived measure, and volume of work for forms of work other than employment, or at least, for own production of services. Similarly there was a need to consider the level of education and ethnic origin or race as a recommended breakdown for statistical reporting, together with sex and age group. Regarding this last point, Ms Benes concurred with a number of experts, that although ethnic origin or race was important as a classificatory variable in some contexts, such information was politically sensitive in an important number of countries. It could be mentioned, however, as a characteristic to be used according to national circumstances. Regarding terminology, some experts were not happy with the term “extended unemployment” to refer to the unemployed and the marginally attached. The term “unemployment” was already established and its use as part of the term for a different indicator could lead to confusion. Other experts stressed that a term of this type would be necessary to promote its use as a headline indicator.
- 130.** Most experts agreed that, ideally, there should not be many indicators relating to labour underutilization, as that would be difficult to explain to users, who usually preferred one or two. The resolution should therefore provide guidelines on the main indicator or indicators for general users including policymakers, and on a larger set of indicators for more specialized users. In this respect, there seemed to be agreement that the main indicators should be drawn from the unemployment rate, the extended unemployment rate and the labour underutilization rate, depending on national circumstances. The overall underutilization rate would be important for international reporting and comparison.
- 131.** There was also a need to provide guidelines on the implementation of the new concepts and indicators. A concern was raised as to whether their measurement would require the inclusion of additional questions in labour force survey questionnaires as well as new procedures to compute the desired indicators. While the new indicators were important to inform policy, a balance was needed to ensure that their measurement would not introduce an undue burden to respondents and to national statistical systems.
- 132.** Most experts agreed that there was no need to include a derived measure of SNA workers. It was mentioned, however, that it would be important to produce the derived measure of labour input for SNA statistics, as otherwise it would be inferred by national accountants, potentially resulting in lower quality estimates.

2.12. Tabulations and classifications

- 133.** In introducing this topic, Ms Benes stressed the importance of developing comprehensive national tabulation plans for statistics of work and of the labour force in consultation with users so as to inform social and economic policies and programmes. She presented the draft guidelines regarding units of measurement (persons and jobs) and reference populations (domestic and resident population) and highlighted the main cross-classifying characteristics to be used systematically in tabulating statistics of work and of the labour force. She also introduced three alternative classifications for persons outside the labour force, based on: (i) degree of labour market attachment; (ii) reasons for not seeking or not being available for employment; and (iii) main activity status (as self-perceived). Basic tabulations for persons in forms of work other than employment had also been introduced as well as basic tabulations for household analysis.
- 134.** The experts stressed the importance of disseminating the relevant available data and provided a number of suggestions and recommendations for completing the list of basic tabulations provided in the draft resolution. In particular, for the unemployed, tabulations were needed by level of education, industry of job search and reasons for job loss. These

were seen as being important and relevant to inform policies, including those targeting skill mismatches and job creation.

- 135.** Tabulations about the population outside the labour force by different classifications was considered as very important to address various labour market issues, including labour underutilization. Regarding the classification “persons outside the labour force by reasons of not seeking and not being available for employment”, it was pointed out that problems such as lack of infrastructure or of childcare facilities could not be considered as labour market reasons for not seeking employment, but rather for not being available. It was noted that the reasons for not seeking or not being available for employment would be different. Several experts felt that it would be best to provide separate classifications or lists of reasons for seeking and for being available for employment, at least for data collection purposes. Leaving some flexibility in the list was also important, as the reasons could vary from one country to another.
- 136.** The classification of persons outside the labour force by main activity status was seen as very important but some experts felt there was a need to include a category for “retired”. One expert indicated that, in his country, retired persons, students and housewives/househusbands represented about 90 per cent of those outside the labour force.
- 137.** Ms Benes explained that the proposed classifications aimed to serve as tools for analysis and not necessarily for data collection. In particular, the classification by reasons for not seeking or not being available for employment was meant to serve as general guidance to create similar categories of different barriers to employment to inform policymaking. There was a need to clarify this in the draft resolution and to revisit the proposed classification by main activity status.
- 138.** Some experts also recalled the importance of producing tabulations by age and hours worked. In particular, for purposes of international comparison, there was a need to include tabulations for the population in the prime working age group (15–64 year olds). Such tabulations would also assist in assessing the transition from employment to retirement. Similarly, tabulations on the volume of work (in terms of full-time equivalents) and on employment by hours worked in five-hour bands were particularly useful.
- 139.** Experts welcomed the guidelines for preparing household-level tabulations as these were very useful especially for better understanding the social dimension of labour market dynamics, and with regard to the analysis of gender issues (for example, division of labour between spouses, presence of children) and poverty. Particularly important were tabulations of households by the labour force characteristics of all household members, as well as tabulations of households headed by single women. To inform poverty analysis, there was a need for tabulations of households by indicators of standards of living (for example, household/per capita income or expenditure, households with/without employed household members, possession of land especially for countries with a large rural/agricultural population, source of income in jobless households, etc.). Some participants, however, pointed out that problems with the quality of income data collected through labour force surveys could hinder the capacity to produce such tabulations. To overcome this problem, various suggestions were made on including relative measures of poverty based on spontaneous self-assessments, inclusion of a few questions about household income in labour force surveys, use of overlapping samples in labour force surveys and in household income and expenditure or other similar surveys. The need to use appropriate household-level weights in preparing such tabulations was also stressed.
- 140.** A number of proposals were also made for improving the terminology. In particular, “jobless households” could be changed to “households where no one is employed”.

141. Ms Benes welcomed the proposals made and noted that they would serve to improve the corresponding section of the draft resolution. She indicated that specific guidance for tabulations of volume of work were not included because they were covered in the resolution concerning the measurement of working time. Reference to such recommendations in the draft resolution, however, needed to be strengthened. Similarly, there was a need to introduce recommendations for tabulations by measures of standards of living, taking into account the work carried out in the context of the development of indicators of decent work and quality of employment.

2.13. Data collection programmes

142. In introducing the discussion on data collection programmes, Ms Benes explained that the relevant section of the draft resolution provided guidance firstly on the periodicities for reporting different types of labour force and work statistics, given their various uses. It then provided advice on determining the data sources that might be used, and went on to describe the reference periods and periodicities of collection that might be adequate for different types of statistics. She outlined the types of statistics that are collected preferably on a sub-annual basis to reflect short-term labour market cycles, on an annual basis for structural analysis and on a less frequent basis for in-depth analysis and benchmarking. She stressed the importance of household surveys specifically designed to collect precise and detailed labour force statistics (such as labour force surveys) as the prime source of statistics on employment and labour underutilization. Other sources such as specialized household surveys, other household surveys, the population census, establishment censuses and surveys, and administrative records also provided valuable data of either an in-depth or complementary nature.

143. With respect to periodicity, the experts recognized that sub-annual collection and reporting was the preferred approach for current statistics and stressed the importance of continuous data collection to produce high-quality statistics. Some countries, however, would be able to conduct a specialized labour force survey on only an annual or less frequent basis due to resource constraints. There was a need for further guidance in this area. Experience had shown that the use of a modular approach to include questions on the labour force in a general purpose survey or living standards survey did also produce data of acceptable quality. It was also pointed out that, depending on national circumstances and priorities, some of the topics recommended to be investigated on a less than annual basis, such as child labour, may need to be collected more frequently. Ms Benes acknowledged these concerns and noted that the draft resolution could usefully provide more guidance on the use of a modular approach and on collection of labour force data in less than annual surveys.

144. It was seen as useful to include, on a periodic basis, modules attached to a labour force survey on participation in other forms of work. Such modules could use different reference periods that were adequate for each form of work in the national context. While seven days was recommended for employment, a period of four weeks for volunteer work and one day for own production of services had proved to be satisfactory in one country.

145. Several experts observed that, while collecting labour market data from a range of different sources with differing subject matter could add greatly to the richness and value of the data available for analysis, achieving coherence among the data collected from different sources was a challenge. It was necessary to ensure that, at the very least, the same concepts and definitions were used in the various sources, although in many cases it would not be possible to collect labour market statistics with the same level of detail and precision as in a labour force survey. It was noted that, even when the same questions were used in surveys with a different focus, the context effect could lead to differing statistics.

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- 146.** The importance of population censuses to provide data for benchmarking, to produce estimates for small areas and small population groups was stressed. There were particular problems, however, in collecting high quality and detailed labour market data from the census. There was a tendency, for example, for census data to overestimate unemployment when questions on search and availability for employment were not asked. Ms Benes advised that there would be an opportunity to update the recommendations on the collection of economic and labour market characteristics in the census in light of the updated standards for labour force and work statistics, as part of the preparations for the 2020 census round.
- 147.** Some experts cited cases where matching or integrating data from different sources, such as administrative and survey data, could shed light on the relationship between labour force and work characteristics on the one hand, and income, expenditure and poverty on the other. They noted that it was difficult to collect detailed and high-quality data on all of these topics in a single survey. It was recognized that the use of data from administrative sources, either directly or through linkage with data from surveys and other sources, had limitations as administrative data were not primarily collected for statistical purposes. Ms Benes felt there was scope to strengthen the recommendations in relation to both the richness of data sources and the advantages and limitations of administrative data sources.
- 148.** The experts were supportive of the recommendation in the draft resolution that countries with regular annual data collection programmes should aim to implement mechanisms for the measurement of gross labour market flows. Some experts noted the value of the use of flow data for the marginally attached. However, they also highlighted some of the limitations of gross flow data in that they did not generally cast light on the reasons for changes in labour market states. There was also discussion of the use of retrospective questions on changes in labour force status, as an alternative method of collecting information on labour market dynamics. However, there were concerns about the quality of data collected using this approach, due to effects arising from issues of recall and respondent perception of the meaning of the questions.

2.14. Data evaluation, tabulation and reporting

- 149.** Ms Benes introduced this agenda item by summarizing the key points in the sections of the draft resolution on evaluation communication and dissemination and on international reporting. She stressed that the use of sound statistical methodology and that evaluation of data quality needed to be an integral part of the process of developing a statistical programme and should embrace all stages of the process. There was a need for a publicized communication strategy to alert and educate the public, in particular policy-makers and the media, about the impact of revisions, new time-series or indicators and changes in historical series well in advance of the release of the statistics. It was important to disseminate the statistics on an impartial basis to all users, in multiple formats, including public-use files whilst providing adequate metadata, and assuring confidentiality. Timeliness of release of the statistics was critical to support appropriate policy formulation and could be facilitated by release of data in stages with rapid preliminary reports for the main aggregates.
- 150.** The section on international reporting of statistics proposed routine reporting of statistics on work and the labour force, in particular labour underutilization, for the total population classified by sex, age groups, broad levels of education, and an urban–rural split. For age groups, standard five-year age bands (from 15–19 to 75+ years) had been proposed. Where there were concerns for data quality due to sampling considerations, broader bands were also suggested. Ms Benes sought specific feedback on the suitability of the age bands proposed. She added that data should also be reported classified by occupation, industry, status in employment and education, in a manner that was compatible with the most up-to-

date versions of the latest international standards classifications for these topics. Metadata should be provided noting, in particular, any differences in relation to the relevant international standards.

- 151.** The experts observed that, in general, the material provided in the resolution was logical and complete. There was a need to expand the recommendations in only a few areas. The reference to the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics was welcomed, and it was suggested this could be given more prominence by moving it nearer to the beginning of the section of the draft resolution dealing with evaluation, communication and dissemination.
- 152.** Several experts commented that communication with users required significant efforts, especially with respect to explaining when variations in the numbers were statistically significant and when they were due to sampling and other statistical effects. Education of the media on this type of issue was seen to be particularly important, but it was observed that even when the media understood concerns about the significance of movement in series, these concerns were frequently not included in media reporting. In addition to sampling errors it was important to communicate information about non-sampling or measurement errors. In managing breaks in series the publication of both series over a specific period was useful, but it was important to provide clear information about when the old series would be discontinued. The importance of consultation with users as part of the process of planning any changes in series was also stressed.
- 153.** There was a need for the resolution to mention not only the need to provide methodological information about seasonally adjusted series, but also to note that seasonal adjustment should be undertaken when data series displayed seasonal trends.
- 154.** Similarly, the draft resolution should envision the future need to disseminate new series and indicators related to decent work and quality of employment in line with emerging policy needs.
- 155.** With respect to the age bands there was a need for flexibility to reflect likely changes over the life of the standards in things such as the entrance age for youth, retirement age for elderly, and the impact of the introduction of retirement benefits in a wider range of countries. The provision of data for these transitional age bands was therefore particularly important. It was also noted that dissemination by narrow age bands may be feasible for aggregate data at national level, but would not always be feasible at regional level, for small population groups, and for detailed cross-tabulations. Where regional estimates or statistics for small population groups were important requirements, these requirements needed to be reflected in the sample design. Users also needed to be informed about the types of estimate that were not feasible within the constraints of a given sample design. Additional funds may need to be found to boost samples in high-priority regions.
- 156.** The importance of making good technical documentation available was stressed and that it was important to document things that went wrong, so that users would be fully informed about data quality problems.
- 157.** It was noted that there was a trade-off between timeliness and quality and that revisions of data should be minimized to the extent possible. Publication of release dates well in advance, perhaps annually, was a good way of promoting both timeliness and public confidence in the data.
- 158.** There was general support for the proposals for international reporting, whilst it was noted that international reporting was burdensome for national agencies and should be streamlined where feasible. With respect to reporting according to the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), it would be useful to note in the resolution

that adoption of the resolution would render many aspects of ICSE obsolete, and require its revision.

- 159.** Ms Benes advised that the Office took on board the very useful comments and observations, which would greatly assist in strengthening these sections of the draft resolution for consideration by the ICLS.

3. Adoption of the report and closure of the Meeting

- 160.** The Meeting considered and discussed a draft report of the Meeting that had been prepared by the Office and provided to the participants prior to the final session. A number of improvements and corrections were proposed and agreed on by the experts. The Chair noted that the comments and suggestions would be incorporated by the Office and that the report of the Meeting had been adopted by the participants.
- 161.** In closing the Meeting, Mr Diez thanked the Chair for the effective manner in which he had moderated the discussion. He congratulated the experts on the positive and collaborative spirit that had been displayed over the week and thanked them for their very constructive inputs, which would greatly assist the Office in improving the draft resolution for consideration by the 19th ICLS. He noted that the meeting of experts presented a special opportunity for statisticians working in government to collaborate with experts nominated from the workers' and employers' groups. He hoped that the links and networks that had been established in the preparations for the ICLS would continue beyond the conference. He hoped, in particular, that the Working Group for the Advancement of Employment and Unemployment Statistics that had been established to assist the ILO in these preparations would remain active and take on new work.
- 162.** Mr Diez acknowledged that the mandate from the 18th ICLS was broader than the agenda presented for discussion at the meeting of experts, and stressed that the reasons for this would be explained and discussed at the 19th ICLS. He noted that the agenda for the ICLS would be very full, with a number of items for information and discussion, in addition to the draft resolution on statistics of the labour force and work. Expectations from the ICLS were high as there was a strong need for the eventual resolution to provide guidance that would help us all to cope better with the challenges faced as a result of the changes that were taking place in the world of work.
- 163.** Finally, he thanked the ILO team that he felt had developed a very strong proposal for consideration by the Meeting, noting the long hours worked both in preparations and during the Meeting. He also thanked the support staff, interpreters and translators whose efforts had contributed greatly to the smooth and effective running of the Meeting.

List of participants
Liste des participants
Lista de participantes

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Membres représentant les gouvernements
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