

DRAFT REPORT OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

10 May 1946

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## I. Summary of Recommendations

The Statistical Commission makes the following recommendations to the Economic and Social Council:

1. That a permanent Statistical Commission of not more than twelve members be established by the Economic and Social Council, and that members be appointed to the Commission in their individual capacities on the basis of technical competence and professional eminence.

2. That the Statistical Commission be charged with the task of assisting the Council in:

- (a) promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability;
- (b) the co-ordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies;
- (c) the development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat;
- (d) advising the members and organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, interpretation and dissemination of statistical information;
- (e) promoting the improvement and use of statistics and statistical methods.

3. That suitable provision be made, in accordance with the detailed recommendations set forth in Chapter IV of this report, for co-ordinating the statistical activities of the United Nations and specialized agencies which are brought into relationship with the United Nations. Specific arrangements should be directed toward maximum co-operation in the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistical information, the elimination of all undesirable duplication, the most efficient use of technical personnel, and combined efforts to minimize the burdens and maximize the usefulness of information provided by national governments and other agencies.

4. That there be established within the Secretariat of the United Nations a strong, thoroughly competent and well integrated statistical

organization to serve the statistical needs of all departments and organs of the United Nations and to perform the other functions described in the detailed recommendations set forth in Chapter V of this report.

5. That action be taken promptly, in accordance with the recommendations set forth in Chapter VI of this report, to insure maintenance without interruption of the valuable statistical work of the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations and of other statistical activities carried on under the sponsorship of the League.

6. That full recognition be given by the United Nations to the important contributions made by the International Statistical Institute and other international organizations to the improvement of world statistics. As indicated in Chapter VII of this report, the Commission hopes to give further study to the role of such organizations in relation to the United Nations and to means by which their activities may be fully utilized in fostering the improvement of statistics.

7. That recognition be given likewise to the important role of the Inter-American Statistical Institute and other regional statistical organizations. Subject to the proviso recommended in Chapter VIII of this report, the Commission believes that the development and growth of such organizations should be encouraged; and that support should be given to their efforts toward the improvement of statistics.

8. That a Sub-Commission on Sampling of not more than nine members be established for the purposes indicated in Chapter IX of this report, to be charged with two immediate tasks:

- (a) to formulate recommendations concerning its own further composition and terms of reference; and
- (b) to survey the present status of the methods of application of sampling in different geographical areas and fields of subject matter.

III. Introduction:

1. The Statistical Commission convened on Wednesday, 1 May 1946, with H. Campion (U.K.), P. C. Mahalanobis (India), A. Sauvy (France), and S. A. Rice (U.S.), who was elected Chairman, in attendance. D. K. Lieu (China) and G. Jahn (Norway) were absent throughout the session, the latter submitting suggestions in a written communication. No notice was received of the appointment of members from Ukraine and U.S.S.R. M. A. Teixeira de Freitas (Brazil) was recorded as having declined appointment for reasons of health; but his greetings and assurances of co-operation with the Commission were brought to it in person by his assistant, Mr. Germano Jardim of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

2. During the period from 1 May to 8 May, inclusive, the Commission considered its agenda and adopted tentative recommendations. It then recessed until 14 May, when it reconvened to consider a draft of its final report which had meanwhile been prepared by its Chairman and Secretary. The Commission's consideration of its agenda was expedited by preparatory work embodied in a number of working papers prepared by experts and submitted in advance by Commission members. Its work was also facilitated by the services of its Technical Consultant, Mr. A. Rosenberg, Director of the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations, and its Secretary, Mr. H. Venneman, of the Division of Statistical Standards of the United States Bureau of the Budget.

3. The Commission regarded its principal tasks as the preparation of recommendations to the Economic and Social Council upon the following subjects:

- (a) the composition and terms of reference of a permanent commission on statistics of the United Nations, including the creation of sub-commissions;

- (b) the statistical organization and functions of the United Nations Secretariat;
- (c) the disposition of existing statistical activities conducted by the League of Nations;
- (d) the general character of statistical relationships between the United Nations and specialized agencies;
- (e) the general character of statistical relationships between the United Nations and other international organizations of a quasi-governmental or non-governmental character, including those organized upon a regional basis.

4. The Commission feels that its recommendations present a sound foundation for the essential role which the collection, analysis and dissemination of statistics will inevitably play within the international system under construction by the United Nations. They provide suitable bases for immediate actions by the Economic and Social Council upon each of the subjects just named. Subsequent, more detailed recommendations by the Commission should await the permanent constitution of its membership and further study of the extensive documentation already in its possession. They must also await the further development of the organization of the United Nations and its affiliated agencies, and of their respective organs and secretariats.

III. Composition and Terms of Reference of the Statistical  
Commission of the United Nations

A. Composition of the Statistical Commission

1. The Commission recommends that a permanent Statistical Commission of not more than twelve members be appointed by the Economic and Social Council. The members should be appointed in their individual capacity on the basis of their professional eminence, expert knowledge and experience in statistical work. Such qualifications should take precedence in any consideration given to the representation of subject-matter fields and areas of specialized technical knowledge, and to the desirability of widespread geographical representation. No alternates should be recognized, and the Council should therefore consider, in appointing members to the Commission, the likelihood of their ability to attend sessions regularly.

2. Members of the Commission should be appointed for a term of three years. They should be eligible for re-appointment. The Council should recognize the need for continuity by adopting a system of "staggered" terms. For example, initially one-third of the Commission might be appointed for one year, one-third for two years, and one-third for three years. Thereafter one-third of the Commission would be appointed annually for a full term of three years.

3. Specialized agencies should not have representation on the Commission as such. It would be desirable, however, for specialized agencies to be represented, without vote but with an opportunity to participate in discussion, whenever questions affecting them appear upon the Commission's agenda. It is therefore recommended in Chapter IV of this report that agreements with specialized agencies include provision for such participation.

4. The Commission considers that it is authorized to recommend to the Council the appointment of sub-commissions with limited terms of reference to study particular problems as the needs may arise. Initially, the Commission recommends the appointment of a Sub-commission on Sampling,

discussed in Chapter IX of this report. In addition the Commission may itself appoint suitable ad hoc or standing committees from among its own members. It is assumed further that the Commission and its sub-commissions and committees may obtain the technical assistance of qualified persons who are not members thereof; provided that if expense to the United Nations is involved the approval of the Secretary-General be first secured.

B. Terms of Reference of the Statistical Commission

5. The Statistical Commission recommends to the Economic and Social Council that the Commission's initial terms of reference should be stated as follows:

The Commission shall assist the Council:

- (a) in promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability;
- (b) in the co-ordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies;
- (c) in the development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat;
- (d) in advising the members and organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, interpretation and dissemination of statistical information;
- (e) in promoting the improvement and use of statistics and statistical methods.

6. The Commission understands that from time to time it may propose to the Council any changes in these terms of reference which it may deem desirable in the light of experience. The following paragraphs present the Commission's interpretation of the terms of reference stated in paragraph five:

7. Promoting the development of national statistics and the improvement of their comparability. This task will be performed in close collaboration with the statistical unit of the United Nations Secretariat. It is a continuing function which requires constant attention. Contact with national governments will be maintained on a day-to-day basis by the

Secretariat through the collection, analysis, and publication of statistical information. The Commission should be in a position to advise the Secretariat on problems which will arise in these processes. The Commission may also establish committees or sub-commissions in various fields in which the need for comparability of data among national governments may become acute. It would be the task of these groups to recommend ways of attaining comparability through the adoption of uniform standards by national governments, and by other means.

8. Co-ordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies.

The Commission should advise the Council concerning agreements to be reached with the specialized agencies defining their respective areas of statistical activity. General provisions respecting statistics to be incorporated in agreements between the United Nations and specialized agencies are set forth in Chapter IV of this report. The co-ordination process is an operating function to be performed by the Secretariat within the framework established by recommendations of the Commission.

9. Initially the Commission contemplates the adoption of a general plan which will recognize the primary statistical interests of each specialized agency. The collection by the latter of data in its primary field must be without prejudice, however, to the right of the United Nations to concern itself with statistics in the same subject area so far as they may be essential for its own purposes or for the improvement of statistics throughout the world. In certain instances, when the data are basic to the work of several specialized agencies, provision should be made for their collection centrally by the statistical unit of the Secretariat. Subsequent problems of co-ordination, as they arise, may be referred to the Commission for advice, particularly in cases which are not satisfactorily solved by negotiation between the Secretariat and the specialized agencies. To facilitate co-operative arrangements among the specialized agencies and the Secretariat, the Commission recommends the establishment of an inter-agency Statistical Co-ordinating Committee, as described in Chapter IV



of this report.

10. Development of the central statistical services of the Secretariat.

It is important that there be one focal point for statistical activities in the Secretariat. The Commission is in accord with the recommendations of the Preparatory Commission that the statistical work of the constituent organs of the United Nations be centralized in a statistical unit in the Department of Economic Affairs, which would also undertake work for all other Departments of the Secretariat. The Commission should assist in the development of the statistical unit of the Secretariat by making recommendations regarding its staffing, organizational structure and functions, and by providing continuing advice on operational problems. The Commission's initial recommendations are set forth in Chapter V of this report.

11. Advising the members and organs of the United Nations on general questions relating to the collection, interpretation and dissemination of statistical information. This function implies that the Statistical Commission will serve as a technical advisory body not only to the Economic and Social Council and the statistical unit of the Secretariat, but also to all organs of the United Nations and to member governments. Co-operative working relationships must be established as soon as possible among the various Commissions appointed by the Council. It is believed that all of them, in varying degrees, will be concerned with matters requiring statistical information. It is particularly important that the Statistical Commission be regarded as having within its area of competence technical statistical fields, the substantive aspects of which may be assigned to other Commissions. Similar relationships should obtain between the Statistical Commission and other organs of the United Nations.

12. Promoting the improvement and use of statistics and statistical methods. This function is very broad and should cover adequately any work which the Commission may undertake through the promotion of uniform standards as to kinds of data to be collected by member governments and

as to the methods of their collection. This will be accomplished in part through the work of committees or sub-commissions to be designated for particular fields as the needs arise. Improvement will also be accomplished through the current work of the Secretariat in its dealings with national governments on statistical matters. It is essential that the Commission and the Secretariat play an active role in promoting continuously the adoption and use of the most valid and reliable statistics and statistical methods, including sampling and other modern techniques of collection and analysis. The Commission should also promote to the fullest extent possible the highest level of education and training of statistical personnel.



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IV. Statistical Relationships of United Nations with  
Specialized Agencies

1. The relationships to be established between the United Nations and the specialized agencies concerning their statistical activities presented the Commission with an old problem in a new form. It is a problem which has long been debated in connection with the development and evolution of national statistical systems, where it has frequently been described as an issue between the "centralization" or "decentralization" of statistics.

2. Simply stated, the general question is whether the many types of statistics required for the administration of diverse functions within a complex political order should be collected centrally, or whether their collection should be left in each instance to the particular agency which has a special need for them in its own work. The question is complicated by the fact that the same or similar statistics are often required by a number of separate users. Moreover, there may be needs to combine together or otherwise utilize the results of separate statistical inquiries within more general compilations or analyses.

3. The general question may be restated with respect to the United Nations and its affiliated international organizations as follows: To what extent should each of these be free to develop its own statistical activities independently of the others? If complete independence is undesirable, what means of central control or co-ordination among them would be most desirable and practicable?

4. At one extreme, complete independence would entail much unnecessary and undesirable duplication of effort. Perhaps even more important, it would throw added burdens upon national governments which would be called upon by international organizations to answer unrelated requests for information. If the information sought in each case was either identical or completely dissimilar, the task of the national government would at least be unambiguous. This could scarcely be the

situation, however, if the demands of international organizations for national statistics were wholly unrelated. Many such statistical demands, while pertaining to the same subjects, would present annoying and burdensome variations in their detailed specifications.

5. At the other extreme, complete centralization of responsibility for the collection of statistics from national governments would seriously impair the abilities of the specialized agencies to conduct their work. It would deprive them of direct access to essential working tools and make them dependent upon intervening mechanisms of data collection over which they had no control.

6. As between these extremes the Commission has taken, in its opinion, a realistic and reasonable middle ground. Its recommendations are based upon three premises which it believes to be sound in principle and acceptable to all parties concerned:

- (a) that so far as possible and practicable, statistical relationships between the United Nations and specialized agencies should be reciprocal in respect to the obligations assumed and the benefits derived;
- (b) that the specialized agencies should retain the right and obligation to collect and use statistics which uniquely pertain to the functions of each;
- (c) that the United Nations Secretariat should assume such statistical obligations and functions, including those of co-ordination, as are inherent in its central position among the specialized agencies under the United Nations Charter. These premises have led the Commission to a precise formulation. The Commission specifically recommends that in all agreements setting forth the general relationships between the United Nations and specialized agencies there be included the eight articles pertaining to statistics that follow. It believes that these eight articles, taken together, provide a sound and equitable basis for effective working

relationships among the specialized agencies and between them and the United Nations in respect to the statistical activities of all.

General Provisions Respecting Statistics to be Incorporated in Agreements Between the United Nations and Specialized Agencies.

1. The United Nations and the specialized agency mutually undertake to strive for maximum co-operation, the elimination of all undesirable duplication between them and the most efficient use of their technical personnel in their respective collection, analysis, publication and dissemination of statistical information. They agree to combine their efforts to secure the greatest possible usefulness and utilization of statistical information and to minimize the burdens placed upon national governments and other organizations from which such information may be collected.

2. The specialized agency recognizes the United Nations as the central agency for the collection, analysis, publication, standardization and improvement of statistics serving the general purposes of international organizations.

3. The United Nations recognizes the right and obligation of the specialized agency to collect such statistics as are uniquely relevant to the specialized responsibilities of the agency. However, such recognition is without prejudice to the right of the United Nations to concern itself with statistics in the same subject area so far as they may be essential for its own purposes or for the improvement of statistics throughout the world.

4. It is agreed that the United Nations shall develop administrative instruments and procedures through which effective statistical co-operation may be secured between the United Nations and the agencies brought into relationship with it. It is recognized that effective co-operation between the United Nations and the specialized agency will require consultation between them before either shall undertake any new major statistical activity or research project in which the other may have a substantive interest.

5. It is recognized as desirable that the collection of statistical information should not be duplicated by the United Nations or any of its affiliated agencies whenever it is practicable for any of them to utilize information or materials which another may have available. The United Nations undertake to bring about agreements designed to give effect to this principle.

6. In order to build up a central collection of statistical information for general use, it is agreed in principle that data supplied to the specialized agency for incorporation in its basic statistical series or special reports should so far as practicable be supplied in duplicate to the United Nations. Although simultaneous filing of such data with the specialized agency and the United Nations by the originating agency is deemed to be desirable, the most practicable arrangements for compliance with the principle shall be settled by mutual agreement between the specialized agency and the United Nations.

7. To assist in giving effect to the co-operative arrangements set forth in this agreement, the United Nations agrees to establish a Statistical Co-ordinating Committee composed of one representative each of its own statistical service and of the statistical services of all specialized agencies with whom this agreement has been made. The representative of the United Nations in the said Committee shall serve ex-officio as its chairman.

8. It is mutually agreed that the Statistical Commission of the United Nations and any statistical commission or committee which may be established by the specialized agency shall keep each other informed concerning subjects to appear upon their respective agenda. Whenever either of them shall express an interest in a subject to appear upon agenda of the other, the latter shall invite the former to participate without vote in the consideration of such subjects.

V. Statistical Organization and Functions of the United Nations Secretariat

1. The Statistical Commission deems it of the utmost importance that an effective central statistical unit be established in the United Nations Secretariat. It concurs in the recommendation of the Preparatory Commission that the statistical work of all the constituent organs of the United Nations be centralized in a statistical unit in the Department of Economic Affairs which would also undertake work for other Departments of the Secretariat. The Commission recommends that this arrangement be formalized through appropriate administrative action by the Secretary-General.

2. The Commission recommends that the central statistical unit of the Secretariat perform the functions described in the succeeding paragraphs. The Commission should be called upon to give continuing advice concerning the execution of these functions and any major problems which may arise in the operations of the statistical unit.

3. Provision of informational service to the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General will require immediate access to reliable information to assist him and all organs of the United Nations in policy discussions and determinations. Statistical data from all sources will have to be brought together, analyzed and interpreted. For this purpose the Secretary-General should be able to secure needed data through the statistical unit of the Secretariat.

4. Collection and analysis of statistics from member governments, specialized agencies, and other sources. The various organs, departments and divisions of the United Nations will require a great variety of statistical data in the exercise of their respective functions. These data will have to be collected regularly or on ad hoc basis, from member governments, specialized agencies or other sources, and analyzed by the Secretariat.



5. Critical examination and evaluation of statistical findings employed by the United Nations. It is common experience that statistical data available from different sources on the same subject may be widely at variance. It was this experience that led the government of the United Kingdom to direct in 1941 that the Central Statistical Office in the Offices of the War Cabinet should be generally responsible for the accuracy and consistency of statistical facts presented for Cabinet consideration. A normal function of the Secretariat will be the collection, critical examination, evaluation and analysis of statistics from member governments, specialized agencies and other sources. To the extent that separate statistical functions and interests may be developed within the separate organs, departments and divisions of the United Nations, these will have to be co-ordinated by the central statistical unit of the Secretariat.

6. Publication of statistics. International publications relating to statistics, regular and occasional, will be a normal and useful consequence of the collection and analysis processes mentioned in paragraph four above.

7. Collection of statistics in certain fields for specialized agencies affiliated with the United Nations. Certain data (e.g., on population and on estimated national income) will be required not only by the United Nations itself but also by all or several of the specialized agencies which will be brought into relationship with it. It is essential in such instances, first, that the same basic figures be used by all concerned; second, that member governments be spared the costs and annoyance of supplying the same information to a plural number of international offices. In such cases the Secretariat of the United Nations should perform a central statistical collecting function for specialized agencies. As its facilities are developed the statistical unit of the Secretariat can be expected increasingly to serve as a statistical servicing instrument for such agencies.

8. Co-ordination of statistical activities of specialized agencies.

Agreements will have to be reached concerning the respective areas of statistical activity of the specialized agencies. It might for example be agreed that international data respecting agricultural production should be collected by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The initiative in bringing about such agreements should be taken by the United Nations Secretariat in consultation with the Statistical Commission. The Statistical Commission further recommends that an interagency Statistical Co-ordinating Committee be established by the United Nations Secretariat with a view to facilitating the co-ordination of statistical activities of the specialized agencies, as described in Article 7 of the proposed agreement with specialized agencies set forth in Chapter IV of this report.

9. Promotion of development and improvement of statistics. The statistical data required for international purposes will be unavailable or inadequate in many of the United Nations. It should be a function of the Statistical Commission to formulate certain common standards as to kinds of data to be collected by member governments and other agencies and as to the methods of their collection and form of presentation. Only by the formulation and acceptance of desirable common standards concerning statistical methods, concepts, definitions, reporting periods, forms of presentation, etc., will the data of the several member governments become sufficiently comparable for international purposes. It should be a function of the Secretariat to assist the Statistical Commission in formulating and giving effect to such desirable standards.

10. To the extent practicable, the staff of the statistical unit of the Secretariat should be available for consultation and advice with respect to statistical inquiries or analyses proposed or contemplated by any constituent part of the United Nations, specialized agencies, member governments, and other agencies. Its performance of consultative and advisory functions will, in turn, further and facilitate its successful performance of all its other functions.

11. In order to promote the development and improvement of statistics in the most effective manner possible, the Commission recommends that the Secretariat provide a qualified field staff to assist member governments in the interpretation and application of desirable uniform statistical standards. It is believed that the mere formal transmission of recommendations to governments may lead to their misinterpretation or inadequate consideration unless they are reinforced by such direct consultation.

12. The Commission believes that development and improvement of statistics throughout the world are dependent in large part on the level of training of technical personnel. It therefore recommends that, within the limitations of available funds and staff, the Secretariat should provide opportunities for the training of technical personnel of member governments. To the same end, the Secretariat should also provide for the use of its facilities by mature scholars.

13. The Commission recommends that the Secretariat perform any other functions contributing to the development and improvement of world statistics which may prove desirable in the light of experience. The Statistical Commission should provide continuing advice to the Secretariat in developing such functions.

14. Maintenance of an international clearing house for statistics.

If the preceding functions are successfully undertaken, the central statistical unit of the Secretariat will become an international repository of statistical information. It should seek to attain such a status by the development of all possible modern library and filing devices which would serve that end. Arrangements with specialized agencies, recommended in Chapter IV, are designed to accomplish as one objective that of maintaining a central collection of statistical information for general use. The end in view is that of making generally available statistics pertaining to international affairs and not merely of establishing a routine international documentation service.

15. The Statistical Commission wishes to emphasize that the statistical unit of the Secretariat should provide constructive leadership in international statistical affairs. It is therefore particularly important that it be staffed with personnel of the highest order of competence.



## VI. Statistical Activities of the League of Nations

1. The Statistical Commission considers it of the utmost importance to make immediate arrangements to maintain without interruption the valuable statistical work of the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations and other statistical activities carried on under the sponsorship of the League.

2. In order to insure continuity in this work the Statistical Commission recommends that existing arrangements, now effective until 31 July 1946, respecting the activities and staff of the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations, and such other arrangements as may be necessary with respect to other statistical activities of the League, be extended if necessary. It is particularly desirable to provide sufficient time for the Secretary-General to examine this work, to formulate plans, and to make proposals for consideration by the Statistical Commission concerning the future disposition of the League's present statistical activities.

3. The principal concern of the Commission in its study of this question was the statistical work of the League Secretariat. Consideration was also given, however, to the organization and functions of the League's Committee of Statistical Experts and the several sub-committees established under its auspices, as well as to the provisions and status of the International Convention Relating to Economic Statistics and the Final Act of the International Conference Relating to Economic Statistics.

4. The Commission is of the opinion that the functions of the Committee of Statistical Experts should be taken over as rapidly as possible by the United Nations Statistical Commission. The terms of reference recommended to the Council for the Statistical Commission have been so formulated as to embrace these functions.

5. The Commission has not formulated recommendations as to precise administrative or financial arrangements necessary to implement its general

recommendation on this matter, because it is aware that these questions are not peculiar to those activities of the League of Nations which come within its competence.

6. The Commission's study of the statistical work of the League of Nations disclosed a number of questions to which definitive answers cannot or should not be formulated immediately. These questions concern the status of studies and reports in process, proposals for establishment of sub-commissions to assume responsibility for specific functions, possible modification or re-negotiation of the International Convention Relating to Economic Statistics, and the like.

7. In leaving these questions for later consideration, the Commission assumes that acceptance by the Council of its recommendation looking to the establishment of a fully constituted Statistical Commission will permit action to be taken in the near future. The Commission hopes that meanwhile suitable interim measures can be devised by the Secretary-General to prevent interruption or loss of momentum in the economic research and other activities sponsored by the League's Committee of Statistical Experts.

VII. Relationships of the United Nations with International  
Quasi-governmental and Non-governmental  
Statistical Organizations

1. Being keenly aware of the important contributions to the improvement of world statistics which have been made by the International Statistical Institute and other international organizations in this field, the Statistical Commission desires that full recognition be accorded to their work. The Commission anticipates that it will be possible at a later session to formulate recommendations as to specific methods by which such recognition might be expressed through the United Nations, and as to ways in which such organizations might be related to the United Nations and their activities utilized in fostering international co-operation in the improvement of statistics.

2. The Commission hopes particularly that appropriate means can be devised to bring the International Statistical Institute into harmonious and mutually advantageous relationship with the United Nations. Consideration of such action at an early session of the Statistical Commission is desirable, in view of the forthcoming conference of the Institute to be held in the United States during 1947. It is believed that this conference will provide an opportunity for re-vivification of the Institute and expansion of its membership, as well as for consideration by the Institute of proposals concerning its relationships with the United Nations.

3. The Commission deems it inappropriate at this time to make recommendations concerning the role of the International Statistical Institute and other international organizations in the field of statistics which have not been brought into relationship with the United Nations. The Commission believes, however, that such organizations should be encouraged, to the fullest extent practicable, to continue and broaden their efforts in such fields as the improvement of standards, long-range methodological research at the highest level of competence, sponsorship of conferences and other forums for interchange of scientific knowledge, and the like. The



Commission also endorses the concept of an "international statistical academy" as an effective instrument for improvement of statistics throughout the world.

VIII. Relationships of the United Nations with  
Regional Statistical Organizations

1. The Statistical Commission recognizes the value and importance of contributions to the improvement of statistics made by regional organizations such as the Inter-American Statistical Institute and the Middle East Statistical Bureau. It believes that such regional organizations should be utilized by the United Nations to the fullest practicable extent in promoting the development of statistics throughout the world.

2. The Commission recommends, however, that in bringing regional organizations into relationship with the United Nations, the principle should be established that the United Nations must maintain the right of direct contact with national governments in the field of statistics.

3. The foregoing principle should be interpreted with the understanding that in some instances, particularly those relating to long-range statistical activities, it may be desirable to collect certain types of data through a regional organization rather than directly from national governments; but such arrangements should be adopted only by mutual agreement between the United Nations Secretariat and the national governments concerned.

4. The Statistical Commission hopes at an early date to recommend means by which regional statistical organizations may be most effectively brought into relationship with statistical activities of the United Nations.



IX. Sub-Commission on Sampling

1. Without prejudice to the subsequent establishment of additional sub-commissions on other subjects, the Commission recommends the immediate creation of a Sub-Commission on Sampling. The application of statistical methods to the collection by governments of sample data in various fields is a development of recent years. Up to the present it has been limited to a few countries in which competent statistical guidance has been available.

2. Sampling methods have many advantages. The cost is only a small fraction of that required for complete enumeration. The investigating staff required is much smaller so that it is easier to give them necessary training and have the work carried out under adequate supervision. The results of a sample survey are available far more quickly, and it is possible to repeat a sample survey every year or at shorter intervals. By varying the size and design of the sample it is possible to secure results within any desired margin of "error" and even to exceed the accuracy of a poorly planned or badly administered complete enumeration. For all of these reasons extensions in the use of sampling methods offer great promise for the development and improvement of statistical information in all parts of the world.

3. After careful consideration of possibilities the Commission came to the conclusion that it would be impracticable at its present session to formulate definitive terms of reference for the Sub-Commission. It was felt that this formulation could best be drafted by the sampling experts who might initially be appointed to the Sub-Commission.

4. In general either or both of two lines of work might be undertaken by the Sub-Commission with consequent bearing upon the selection of its permanent personnel. One of these lines of work would pertain to the applications of sampling methods in particular subject-matter fields and

in particular countries. The second would pertain to advancing the development of sampling methods generally. While the first was felt to be primary in respect to the Sub-Commission's immediate tasks, the second should not be wholly neglected.

5. The Commission therefore recommends that the Council establish a Sub-Commission on Sampling of not more than nine members and give it two immediate assignments:

(a) the formulation of recommendations upon the composition and terms of reference of a permanent Sub-Commission on Sampling;

(b) an examination of the present status of the methods used in applications of sampling in different countries and in different fields of subject matter.

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