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STATISTICAL COMMISSION
Eleventh session
Item 15 of the provisional agenda

PRIORITIES OF THE COMMISSION'S WORK PROGRAMME

1. The Commission will recall that it has made a review of priorities during previous sessions in the light of then existing resolutions of the Council and rules of procedure.
2. Resolution 402 B (XIII), which was adopted subsequent to the sixth session of the Commission, established procedures which are recommended in connexion with the establishment of priorities. These are as follows:
 - (a) The Secretary-General should report to each commission session the action which he has taken to carry out the commission's programmes according to the priorities previously established, and submit suggestions of priorities for future work, including suggestions regarding projects which might be deferred or eliminated;
 - (b) The programme of work of each commission should be divided into broad subjects, a differentiation being made, where practicable, between those of higher and lower priority;
 - (c) The broad subjects should be subdivided into three groups, the first group consisting of continuing projects of high priority, the second group of ad hoc projects also of high priority, and the third group of projects of lower priority, which might be deferred or eliminated, or undertaken only in so far as resources permitted;
 - (d) It is not necessary to indicate the relative importance of individual projects in the first and second groups, respectively mentioned in (c); but, within the group of subjects of lower priority, individual projects should be listed, if possible, in their order of priority, or some indication of priority should be given;

(e) In the case of ad hoc projects, there should be an indication of probably duration;

(f) The Secretary-General, within his existing authority, should have discretion as to the scheduling of work in order that the best use may be made of existing staff and resources and to take account of unforeseen circumstances which may arise.

3. The following paragraph, based on the discussion of the Commission at its eleventh session, contains the proposals of the Secretary-General on the priorities which might be accorded to the various projects reviewed by the Commission.

4. Continuing projects of high priority

(1) Systematic publication of international statistics, together with the development of appropriate indexes and bibliographies, and implementation of the changes resulting from the revision of the SITC in the programme of statistical compilation and publication; practical use of high speed, large memory stored-programme computing machinery in order that the Secretariat may be able to take advantage of the resources of the machines to extend the range and improve the timeliness of its compilations and, where required, give advice to others on the use of the machines.

(2) The maintenance and development of publications dealing with statistical methods, with particular reference to the need for the inclusion in these publications of material concerning the practices of national offices in solving problems of collection and analysis.

(3) The maintenance and development of mechanisms for regional consultations on statistical questions, especially in connexion with the statistical needs of the less well-developed countries.

(4) Advice and assistance in giving effect to existing standards or guiding principles for the improvement of national and international statistics, together with the exchange of information on problems of methods and applications:

- (a) population and housing censuses,
- (b) vital statistics,
- (c) statistics for social programmes,

- (d) basic industrial statistics,
- (e) index numbers of industrial production,
- (f) external trade and transport statistics,
- (g) distribution statistics,
- (h) national accounts,
- (i) capital formation statistics,
- (j) classification of industrial and related data according to kind of economic activity,
- (k) basic statistical series for use in programmes of economic and social development,
- (l) housing statistics,
- (m) questions of methodology, including sampling.

5. Ad hoc projects also of high priority

- (1) Comparative study of national practices in the field of distribution statistics, and of methods of conducting inquiries in this field.
- (2) Continuation of work towards the improvement of comparability in external trade statistics.
- (3) Comparative study of national requirements and practices in the field of statistics of assets and liabilities and revenue and expenditure of enterprises and development, with the aid of experts where necessary, of proposals concerning this field of statistics.
- (4) Technical study of the statistical unit in economic inquiries; review of national practices in this field and preparation of suitable schemes for classifying enterprise-type units and relating these units and their subdivisions to one another.
- (5) Continue study of systems of industrial statistics of selected highly industrialized countries and of developments in basic industrial statistics and publish manuals and other technical reports concerning this field.
- (6) Prepare a technical publication on the collection and compilation of representative and comparable series of wholesale prices and draft a set of guiding principles on this subject for use internationally.

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- (7) Studies designed to evaluate the accuracy of demographic statistics and methods of differentiating them in publications according to their degree of accuracy, including experimental studies on methods of obtaining vital statistics in countries where the conventional registration methods may not be applicable.
- (8) Collection of information from Member States on indexes of national product and expenditure in constant prices, on the related price index numbers and on the methods of computing these indexes, with a view ultimately to preparing a study of the conceptual and statistical problems in this field in consultation with interested regional and international organizations.
- (9) Development of methods for the compilation of national accounts, with special regard to the problems of capital formation statistics in countries at an early stage of economic development.
- (10) Appraisal of the conceptual and statistical problems in regard to the distribution of personal income with a view to the formulation of international standards in this field.
- (11) Study of the remaining differences in definition and concepts from the OEEC Standardized System and the IMF Balance of Payments Manual in the System of National Accounts, with a view to eliminating these differences; continue the systematic comparison of SNA with the system used by countries with centrally planned economies, in co-operation with regional statistical groups and the statistical offices of Member States.
- (12) Collect information from Member States as to their experience with statistics of input-output and financial transactions, consult with interested international organizations and individual experts, with the object of ultimately stabilizing international standards in these fields.
- (13) Give increased attention to the problems of improving the statistical quality of items in the national accounts.
- (14) Continue the methodological study and evaluation of continuous population registers with a view to measuring their usefulness as (a) a statistical mechanism, (b) a means of verifying the accuracy of population census results, and (c) a mechanism for follow-up studies.

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(15) Study the extent to which countries and territories have been able to adopt international or regional recommendations for population censuses, and also the extent to which inter-regional comparability is maintained.

(16) Completion of studies on methods of estimating housing needs, and of testing the compatibility of housing needs and resources.

(17) Preparation of a handbook on sample surveys of family living conditions, in collaboration with the specialized agencies and scientific institutions, and with the advice of an ad hoc group of experts on sampling to consider methods appropriate to the collection of statistics for social programmes.

(18) Preparation of a handbook on housing census methods.

(19) Initiate studies on economic and social classifications for population and related statistics in use in the various countries with a view to promoting the use of such classifications and international comparability of statistics in this respect.

6. Projects of lower priority

Standards for statistics of:

transport,
crime.



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CONTROL AND LIMITATION OF DOCUMENTATION

(Memorandum by the Secretary-General)

1. At its 729th plenary meeting of 13 December 1957, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1203 (XII) on the Control and Limitation of Documentation, requesting "the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, in co-operation with Member States, to reduce the length and amount of documentation produced during 1958", suggesting a "target figure of 25 per cent below the 1957 level for the over-all output of such documentation" and establishing a committee to "advise the Secretary-General on the most effective means of implementing the present resolution". Following study by a Committee on the Control and Limitation of Documentation (A/3888), by the Secretary-General (A/3921) and by the Fifth Committee (A/3982), the General Assembly (at its 781st plenary meeting on 14 November 1958) adopted resolution 1272 (XIII) which

"3. Draws the particular attention of all organs and subsidiary bodies to the recommendations contained in ... the Committee's report, requesting those organs and bodies to include in the agenda of their next session the question of the control and limitation of their documentation; ...

"7. Urges the representatives of Member States as well as all other members of commissions, committees and similar bodies to co-operate fully with the Secretary-General in carrying out the policy laid down by the General Assembly, particularly in resolutions 593 (VI) of 4 February 1952, 789 (VIII) of 9 December 1953 and 1203 (XII) of 13 December 1957."

2. Pursuant thereto, Economic and Social Council resolution 742 II (XXVIII), adopted at its 1089th plenary meeting on 31 July 1959,

"1. Calls the attention of its subsidiary bodies to the fact that the problem is a continuing one and should be constantly borne in mind and reviewed;

"2. Requests the Secretary-General to prepare, for inclusion in the report of the Council to the General Assembly at its fourteenth or fifteenth session or in the report which he has been requested to make under General Assembly resolution 1272 (XIII), a summary of the action taken by the Council and its subsidiary bodies pursuant to that resolution."

3. In connexion with the above resolutions, the Commission might wish to note that whereas the documentation for its tenth session amounted to 1,321 pages, that for the present session amounts to 1,052 pages, or a reduction of over 20 per cent. The Commission is invited to comment on whether this reduction in any way affected the conduct of its business and to make suggestions with reference to the possibility of further reducing documentation for its future sessions.
