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TOURIST STATISTICS
(Report by the Secretary-General)

1. The Commission considered international tourist statistics at its ninth session; resolution 23 (IX) reads:

"The Statistical Commission

Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States and in co-operation with the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Union of Official Travel Organization, and taking into account the views of the Commission, to seek agreement on the statistical classification to be used in recording the movement of foreign visitors and on the terminology to be used in connexion with the classification, and to suggest methods for collecting statistical data according to the classification, as far as possible without increasing frontier formalities."

Since then, the Statistical Office has co-operated with other interested bodies - particularly the International Union of Official Travel Organisations (IUOTO) - and has emphasized the need to take advantage of the practical possibilities which exist for obtaining statistics of international visitors while keeping to a minimum the formalities to which travellers are subjected.

2. At the request of the Economic and Social Council, a group of experts met in Geneva in February 1962 to prepare recommendations concerning the nature, scope and location of a conference on international travel and tourism, including a provisional agenda for the consideration of the Council at its thirty-third

session. The experts agreed that the conference would not concern itself with the technical problems of statistics. They felt, however, that it would assist the conference to know the views of the Statistical Commission on the definition of "tourist" or "temporary visitor". The IUOTO has, in this connexion, agreed to prepare a document for the conference on current definitions used by Governments for (a) administrative purposes and (b) statistical purposes, and to suggest a definition which would serve both purposes.

3. International travel statistics are aggregates, the components of which are drawn from the individual countries of the world. These components inevitably reflect differences of an economic, geographical, political and administrative kind, depending on the situation of the country that provides them. The consequence is that the traveller has to comply with different formalities in each country and often with different formalities in the same country, depending on the point and method of entry. The forms which he must fill are often the results of attempts to comply with a variety of different legal requirements, and they are frequently unsuccessful.

4. At the opposite end of the scale of obstacles to travel statistics is the practice, happily a growing one, of doing away with formalities altogether. Here the abolition of visas and records of arrival and departure has put an end to all those contacts between the traveller and national officials, which formerly yielded statistics. Here the use of other methods of obtaining data are essential.

5. Another set of difficulties arises from the fact that the field of international travel statistics straddles a number of fields of traditional statistics and has up to now been trying to accommodate itself to definitions and classifications devised for other purposes, such as population movements, balance of payments and transport.

6. Past efforts, mainly by the League of Nations and IUOTO, have been directed to defining what a tourist is. In order to keep the coverage co-extensive with the area of interest, it has been necessary continually to extend the definition of tourist to the point where it now includes a number of categories, such as persons travelling on business of a private or public nature, students, persons seeking medical treatment. It is clear from these examples that a term such as "tourist", which has a connotation relating to the purpose of the travel rather

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than to the facts, can be unnecessarily restrictive. Moreover, it is a definition which does not have any counterpart in the official statistics of many countries. For these reasons, it would be desirable to plan to eliminate some of these problems by defining the coverage to include all travellers and to seek a classification of travellers into categories for which data can be provided by countries.

7. The present categories which IUOTO has recommended consists of: (i) tourists, who might better be described as visitors, (ii) returning residents, (iii) persons in transit, (iv) persons coming to work, (v) migrants, (vi) other. It is clear that international travel statistics have, up to now, been concentrating on obtaining information on the first category - the visitors. The remaining five categories are listed merely in order to segregate them from the first category.

8. It may be that too little attention has been given in the past to the reciprocal nature of international travel. Attention has always been focused on the "visitor arriving", while ignoring the "resident returning" who alone has all the information that is necessary for a complete system of international travel statistics. Moreover, questions put to the traveller at this stage are questions by the authorities of his country of residence and are less likely to be misunderstood and resented than questions put to him by the authorities of other countries. Nor can formalities at this stage be considered any obstacle to travel. From a purely statistical standpoint, therefore, the best sampling frame is the total of returning residents and perhaps further study should be given to designing a short statistical reporting card to be given to a sample of residents returning after more than twenty-four hours abroad.

9. Hotel statistics are another useful source of data, which is exploited in a number of countries; they might be made more useful if the hotel records distinguished from the rest those guests who arrived from another address in the country. Data resulting from the transport of the visitor may also be useful. The manifests of ships and aircraft are useful and travellers by ship or aircraft can be asked to fill forms with less inconvenience to them than travellers over land frontiers. It is travellers over land frontiers that give the most difficulty and thus provide the most opportunity for statistical ingenuity; for instance, the common practice of issuing railway tickets by machine might readily

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yield data, as might also a sample check of road vehicles at points where important highways cross a frontier.

10. The Statistical Commission may wish to take note of the interest in this field of IUOTO (which has consultative status with the United Nations) and of its experience in compiling tourist statistics on an international basis and to recommend that IUOTO, in consultation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations, draw up agreed proposals for the improvement of tourist statistics for submission to Governments for comment.
