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TOURIST STATISTICS

(Report by the Secretary-General)

1. The United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism (Rome, 21 August - 5 September 1963), in accordance with paragraph 5 of Economic and Social Council resolution 870 (XXXIII), of 9 April 1962, suggested for consideration by the Commission and by the International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO) the following definitions of "visitor" and "tourist" (Recommendations on International Travel and Tourism, E/CONF.47/18, page 5):

"For statistical purposes, the term 'visitor' describes any person visiting a country other than that in which he has his usual place of residence, for any reason other than following an occupation remunerated from within the country visited.

"This definition covers:

"Tourists, i.e., temporary visitors staying at least 24 hours in the country visited and the purpose of whose journey can be classified under one of the following headings:

"(a) leisure (recreation, holiday, health, study, religion and sport);

"(b) business, family, mission, meeting.

"Excursionists, i.e., temporary visitors staying less than 24 hours in the country visited (including travellers on cruises).

"The statistics should not include travellers who, in the legal sense, do not enter the country (air travellers who do not leave an airport's transit area, and similar cases)."

2. After considering the report of the Conference, the Council on 16 December 1963 adopted resolution 995 (XXXVI), which inter alia

"Urges the Statistical Commission and the International Union of Official Travel Organizations to study the question of the definition of the term 'visitor' for statistical purposes, as proposed by the Conference."

3. The Commission will wish to consider methods by which statistics could in practice be collected in terms of the proposed definition and also whether implementation of the definition would increase frontier formalities. These matters might, in some countries, be of importance, particularly because of the role that the legal status and employment status of persons crossing frontiers play in the suggested definition.

4. In considering the question of tourist statistics, the Commission has emphasized the importance of not increasing obstacles to travel and the need for co-ordinating tourist statistics with the other statistics of persons crossing national frontiers, particularly migration statistics (see Statistical Commission resolution 23 (IX) and E/3633, paras. 130-132).

5. It will be recalled that the League of Nations (Official Journal, February 1937, section 3846 and Annex 1635, appendix II) made the following suggestions:

"To secure the comparability of international tourist statistics, the term 'tourist' shall, in principle, be interpreted to mean any person travelling for a period of twenty-four hours or more in a country other than that in which he usually resides.

"The following are to be regarded as tourists:

"(1) Persons travelling for pleasure, for domestic reasons, for health, etc.;

"(2) Persons travelling to meetings or in a representative capacity of any kind (scientific, administrative, diplomatic, religious, athletic, etc.);

"(3) Visitors travelling for business purposes;

"(4) Visitors arriving in the course of a sea cruise, even when they stay less than twenty-four hours. The latter should be reckoned as a separate group, disregarding, if necessary, their usual place of residence.

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"The following are not to be regarded as tourists:

"(1) Persons arriving, with or without a contract, to take up an occupation or engage in any business activity in the country;

"(2) Other persons coming to establish a residence in the country;

"(3) Students and young persons in boarding establishments or schools;

"(4) Residents in a frontier zone and persons domiciled in one country and working in an adjoining country;

"(5) Travellers passing through a country without stopping, even if the journey takes more than twenty-four hours."

The definition suggested by the League of Nations does not differ very markedly from that suggested by the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism, and it can be assumed that the difficulties which have impeded the collection of fully adequate data according to the former would in great measure also apply to the latter. In view of the history of this matter, the Commission may feel that it would be wise first to direct investigation to methods by which the desired type of data can be made available, leaving the question of establishing an internationally agreed definition until considerable experience had been acquired by countries in collecting data in the face of the modern tendency to reduce formalities.

6. It appears that the task of collecting the data, together with related data on tourist expenditures, is one of considerable difficulty and that progress is unlikely to result unless Governments are willing to devote resources to rational planning in the field. Perhaps a good way to start the planning would be for the Commission to recommend that the Statistical Office of the United Nations, in consultation with the International Monetary Fund and with the IUOTO, arrange a study of the subject by an expert followed by a meeting of a group to which countries would send the officers responsible to examine and discuss the recommendations of the study and to formulate a set of technical proposals.

7. The views of the Commission are sought on the proposed definition and on ways of improving the availability of data concerning the tourist trade.

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