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INTERNATIONAL WORK PROGRAMME AND CO-ORDINATION

CO-ORDINATION OF WORLD STANDARDS

Report of the Secretary-General

1. The Commission, at its fourteenth session, noted that "the Co-ordination Committee of the Economic and Social Council had, at its 293rd meeting, discussed the problem of statistical co-ordination. In the course of that discussion, a suggestion had been made that it might be desirable to establish a procedure by which international statistical standards drawn up by any agency should be brought before the Statistical Commission prior to promulgation. The Commission considered that if a procedure of the kind suggested were established, it could be a possible means by which the Commission could carry out its original mandate as the co-ordinating body of the Economic and Social Council for statistical matters. It was emphasized that the setting up of a procedure for this purpose, while it might pose some problems, would in many ways be of assistance to the specialized agencies in ensuring that their standards became truly international, in the sense of being suitable for implementation on a world-wide basis and in fields broader than the field of specialization of the agency" (E/4283, para. 9).
2. The Commission "reaffirmed its confidence in the principle of statistical specialization by agencies, with co-ordination of world standards directed

primarily to those elements of each agency's programme which are interrelated in important ways and which extend beyond the area of competence of any one agency. In the development of statistics which have relevance in many areas of social and economic analysis, great care should be taken in the promulgation of world standards. It was necessary to afford full opportunity for the consideration of all important interrelated uses, having due regard to the flexibility essential to meet the particular requirements of States Members of the United Nations" (para. 12).

3. The Economic and Social Council, at its forty-second session, having taken note with appreciation of the report of the Statistical Commission (E/4283) on its fourteenth session, requested the Secretary-General in resolution 1214 (XLII), in consultation with the specialized agencies:

"... to prepare a report for consideration by the proposed interagency co-ordinating committee on statistical activities, and thereafter by the Statistical Commission at its fifteenth session, on the important interrelated fields of statistics for which world standards are desirable and on the practical methods by which the Statistical Commission could review and make recommendations on proposed statistical standards in these interrelated fields prior to their recognition as world standards".

4. In pursuance of this resolution, the Secretary-General requested each agency to bring to the attention of the interagency consultations held in Rome in July 1967 the "important interrelated fields of statistics for which world standards are desirable" in the view of the agency and also its views on "practical methods by which the Statistical Commission could review and make recommendations on proposed statistical standards in these interrelated fields prior to their recognition as world standards".

5. The participants in the interagency consultations, having discussed the matter at length, drew up a list (annex) of items which they considered examples of fields which were clearly interrelated and among which world standards or changes in existing standards might be proposed. The participants felt that the concurrence of the Commission in the establishment of standards would facilitate their promotion on a world-wide basis. There were many problems involved in establishing practical methods to permit the Commission's review of standards

proposed by the specialized agencies. While procedures differed from one agency to another, generally a technical study was undertaken prior to the drafting of proposed standards and the technical problems were usually reviewed by a committee of experts on the subject. Final draft standards were prepared by the agency on the basis of the experts' recommendations and were then submitted for the approval of the technical statistical body of the responsible agency. After completion of this work, the recommended international standard was submitted to the governing body of the responsible agency. Owing to the fact that the Commission meets biennially, it would often be impossible to secure its recommendations on the proposed standard in time for submission to the governing body of the responsible agency. The participants felt, therefore, that it was in the course of the technical work that the advice and recommendations of the Commission could best be sought by keeping it fully informed of all technical developments. Where a standard had, however, been approved by a governing body, the participants felt that the recommended standard should be transmitted to the Commission for review as to its applicability in the related fields of statistics. At the conclusion of their discussion on this matter, the participants agreed that the specialized agencies would remain in constant consultation with the Statistical Office of the United Nations concerning the timing and form of transmittal to the Commission of any material on world standards.

ANNEX

Interrelated Fields of Statistics

1. Statistical techniques and terminology
 - Sampling
 - Household surveys
 - Data processing
2. Census programmes
 - Population
 - Housing
 - Agriculture
3. Forest inventory
4. Fishery statistics
5. Trade statistics
 - Standard International Trade Classification (SITC)
 - Definitions and methods
6. Industrial statistics
 - International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC)
7. Labour statistics
 - International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)
 - Employment, unemployment and under-employment
 - Statistics of wages, hours of work
8. Vital statistics
 - Principles of vital statistics system
9. Education statistics
 - International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)
10. Financial statistics
 - Balance of payments
 - Public finance
 - Government debt (external)
11. System of national accounts
12. Price statistics
13. Statistics of distribution and transport
14. Health statistics
 - International Classification of Diseases (ICD)
 - Principles of health statistics system