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STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
Sixteenth session  
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN A WORKING GROUP OF THE STATISTICAL  
COMMISSION AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND  
THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

Report of the Working Group of the Statistical Commission

1. Consultations between the Working Group of the Statistical Commission and representatives of the United Nations and the specialized agencies took place in Geneva from 10 to 13 March 1969, pursuant to resolution 1306 (XLIV) of the Economic and Social Council. The Council inter alia requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the executive heads of the specialized agencies,

(a) To take steps to promote arrangements to ensure the development of an integrated and co-ordinated international statistical programme, based on longer term planning than is now in effect, thus contributing to the efficiency of national statistical systems in both developed and developing countries, as well as to the effective use of resources at the international level,

(b) To arrange for joint consultations between representatives of the United Nations and the specialized agencies and a working group consisting of the Chairman and two additional members of the Statistical Commission, with a view to the working group providing a report for members of the Statistical Commission prior to its sixteenth session on the progress made in establishing an integrated programme and in ensuring the necessary co-ordination in fields where its absence is greatest.

2. The agenda of the meeting appears in annex I; the list of participants is given in annex II.

3. Mr. K. Archer was elected chairman of the meeting.

4. The Working Group expressed its satisfaction at the participation of the specialized agencies in the consultations. The United Nations and the specialized agencies had been requested to submit summary documents concerning their activities; these are listed in annex III.

5. Under item 3 of the agenda, the progress already made for improved co-ordination was discussed. The Working Group agreed that in certain areas significant progress had been made and concluded that the most important next steps are those necessary to promote further integration and co-ordination of the international statistical programme. It was noted that the problems of duplication were being handled through the existing machinery constituted by the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, which now held regular meetings to handle such problems as well as to deal with the general aspects of statistical co-ordination within the United Nations system of organizations. The Working Group agreed on the importance of work by the regional economic commissions in promoting the co-ordination of international statistics in their regions; in particular, it took note of the fact that the Conference of European Statisticians had established regular consultations designed for this purpose. The intention of council resolution 1306 (XLIV), however, was to achieve an integrated and co-ordinated statistical programme over the whole field of statistics, taking fully into account the interdependence and interrelations of the statistical activities as a whole while recognizing the need for specialization in the various fields. An integrated approach to statistics was being systematically developed in Member States, and it was felt that the work of the international agencies would better respond to the reliance placed upon them by the national statistical offices if international statistical activities could be looked at comprehensively by the Statistical Commission.

6. The specialized agencies explained the procedures in force for the approval of their programmes. In the light of these procedures, it was difficult to envisage the submission of their programmes to an external body prior to such approval. Moreover, these programmes are keyed to the budget system and as a rule are not drawn up for periods of more than two years. It was generally recognized, however, that there was a need for longer-term planning; reference was made to the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts to Examine the

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Finances of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies, which had emphasized the need for programme planning over a period of as much as six years. This accorded with the views of the Statistical Commission and the Council as expressed in the resolution referred to in paragraph 1.

7. The Working Group emphasized that while the Commission desired a review of the statistical programmes, it did not envisage this review in terms of budgets or financial control. The review, comments and recommendations of the Commission itself on the programme of the United Nations were explicitly recognized as being subject to budgetary examination and other controls by the appropriate United Nations bodies.

8. In the light of the views expressed by the representatives of the specialized agencies, the Working Group felt that it was necessary to make it clear that the Commission, while seeking to influence the development of a fully integrated statistical programme of the United Nations and the specialized agencies, recognized that such influence must be exercised by means of review, comment and advice and not by budgetary or other administrative controls. In this respect, the Commission was acting in its capacity of adviser to the Council on the statistical activities of the United Nations system of organizations with the object of achieving an integration of these activities, which would meet the requirements of the organizations as well as those of the Member States. Such an integration was essential if the close interrelations between statistical fields affecting both the programmes of the international organizations and those of the national statistical offices were to be taken into account.

9. The consultations served to reveal that the difficulties which were explained by the representatives of the specialized agencies would indeed be serious if the Commission were asking for submission prior to approval of what was normally presented to the controlling and authorizing bodies of the agencies in the form of programmes and budgets. The discussion made it clear that this was not the intention of the Commission, which sought rather to achieve a position in which it could advise and comment on the statistical activities of the international organizations as a whole and this intention should be clearly reflected in any requests made to the specialized agencies for the submission of material. The Working Group, therefore, recommended that each agency should be asked to submit

for consideration by the Commission a statement of its activities which would distinguish:

(a) The regular elements of the programme which have been approved within the organization and are expected to continue. For each element, particulars should be given of the resources required and the purposes to be served in relation to the objectives of the specialized agencies concerned and in relation to the broad purposes of the United Nations system as a whole;

(b) The elements newly approved for the future (or submitted for approval), with similar details, and

(c) Projects envisaged for the future as new developments in the statistical programme.

10. For each activity, it would be desirable to indicate the priority status attached, the approximate timing and the method of implementation (for example, conferences, expert groups or direct collection of data from countries). The Statistical Office of the United Nations was requested to draw up a suitable form for the statements. The statements, including that of the Statistical Office of the United Nations, should be exchanged among the agencies. As secretariat of the Statistical Commission, the Statistical Office of the United Nations should prepare a statement of the statistical programme as a whole and present it to the Commission. The Statistical Office should discuss the comprehensive statement with the specialized agencies during the next session of the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities.

11. The Working Group also considered the problems of co-ordination with agencies working in the field of statistics outside the United Nations system of organizations. It was noted that, in spite of the difficulties, it would be useful to obtain similar statements from these organizations and consultations should be arranged for this purpose.

12. The Working Group recommended that it should have a second meeting immediately prior to the sixteenth session of the Statistical Commission.

13. The contents of this report of the Working Group were discussed with the representatives of the specialized agencies in draft form, it, nevertheless, remains entirely the responsibility of the Working Group.

14. The Working Group also wished to report that it recognized both the problems to be faced and the need for the Commission to persevere in its efforts to promote a co-ordinated and integrated statistical programme. It hoped that the recommendations made in its report would aid in overcoming some of the difficulties. The Working Group further wished to call to the attention of the Commission its view that the success of efforts to obtain the kind of statistical programme desired might be considerably enhanced if the statistical programme of each specialized agency was made of the responsibility within the agency of a single division or office.

ANNEXES

Annex I

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman.
2. Adoption of agenda.
3. Co-ordination of international statistical programmes:
  - (a) General aspects of co-ordination;
  - (b) Identification of problem areas;
  - (c) Identification of gaps and indications of priorities.
4. The role of international secretariats in the formulation of statistical programmes.
5. Questions concerning organizations outside the United Nations system.
6. Other business.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

United Nations

Working Group of the Statistical Commission

Mr. K. ARCHER, Commonwealth Statistician, Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Australia

Mr. R. BOWMAN, Assistant Director in charge of Statistical Standards, Bureau of the Budget, United States of America

Mr. A. YEZHOV, Deputy Chief, Central Statistical Board, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Advisers

Mr. S. GENIN, Chief of the Information Division, Central Statistical Board, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Mr. D. LUMNOV, Chief of the International Division, Central Statistical Board, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Statistical Commission

Mr. J. KAZIMOUR, President, Federal Statistical Office, Czechoslovakia

Mr. C. MOSER, Director, Central Statistical Office, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Mr. H. FEBVAY,\* Chef de département, Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques, France

United Nations Secretariat

Mr. P. LOFTUS, Director, Statistical Office

Mr. Z. KEMESSEY, Senior Statistician, Statistical Office

Mr. B. DAVIES, Director, Statistical Division, Economic Commission for Europe

Mr. G. PARNICZKY, Chief, Statistical Unit, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

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\* Representing Mr. J. Ripert, member of the Statistical Commission.

Specialized agencies

- Mr. H. LACROIX, Chief Statistician, International Labour Organisation
- Mr. R. NARAIN, Deputy Director, Statistics Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Mr. S. PRINGLE, Chief, Forest Economics Branch, Forestry and Forest Industries Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- Mr. K. BROLIN, Director, Office of Statistics, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- Mr. R. POULIOT, Statistical Officer, International Civil Aviation Organization
- Dr. W. LOGAN, Director, Division of Health Statistics, World Health Organization
- Mr. A. KUNDU, Head of Statistics Section, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Mr. E. HICKS, Director, Bureau of Statistics, International Monetary Fund
- Mr. L. TILL, Chief Statistician, Trade Intelligence and Special Projects Division, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade



Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Working papers

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| 1   | Provisional agenda   |
| 2   | Note of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| 3   | List of documents  |
| 4   | Note of the World Health Organization  |
| 5   | Note of the International Labour Organisation                                |
| 6   | Note of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations          |
| 7-9 | not issued   |
| 10  | Note of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade                           |
| 11  | Note of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development               |
| 12  | Note of the International Civil Aviation Organization                        |
| 13  | Note of the United Nations Statistical Office                                |

Reference material

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | General co-ordination questions       |
| 2 | Statistical research and publications |

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