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CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES  
 WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES AND CO-ORDINATION

Report of the sixth session

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1 - 2
I. AGENDA OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION AT ITS NINETEENTH SESSION	3 - 36
II. INTERREGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS (SNA)	37 - 41
III. STATISTICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT . . . . .	42 - 46
IV. PRICE STATISTICS PROGRAMME . . . . .	47 - 49
V. INTEGRATED LIST OF STATISTICAL QUESTIONNAIRES . . . . .	50 - 56
VI. STATISTICS RELATING TO THE OUTFLOW OF TRAINED PERSONNEL FROM DEVELOPING TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES . . . . .	57 - 62
VII. RESOURCE USE IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN STATISTICS	63 - 79
VIII. RELATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE MAJOR STATISTICAL POLICY OBJECTIVES	80 - 82
IX. INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATIONS. . . . .	83 - 90
X. DATE AND PLACE OF THE SEVENTH SESSION . . . . .	91
ANNEX. AGENDA	

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The sixth session of the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination was held from 30 June to 1 July 1975 at Geneva. The agenda as adopted is contained in the annex to the present report.
2. Pursuant to the decisions of the Working Group at its earlier sessions, the officers of the Commission who attended served as officers of the Working Group with Sir Claus Moser (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) acting as Chairman of the session. Other members were: MMr. Isaac Kerstenetzky (Brazil), Mr. Jan Kazimour (Czechoslovakia), Mr. Parmeet Singh (Kenya), Mr. Ramesh Chander (Malaysia), and Mr. Joseph W. Duncan (United States of America). Specialized agencies and other bodies represented were: the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

### I. AGENDA OF THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION AT ITS NINETEENTH SESSION

3. The Working Group was informed that the final decision as to the place of the next Statistical Commission meeting would be decided at the fifty-ninth session of the Economic and Social Council which was held at Geneva, 2-31 July 1975.
4. A review of the draft provisional agenda for the nineteenth session based on document E/CN.3/AC.1/2 was undertaken in accordance with the suggestion of the Statistical Commission at its eighteenth session. <sup>1/</sup> For each of the substantive items on the draft agenda, the Director of the United Nations Statistical Office indicated the documentation which it was expected would be prepared, as indicated below.

#### A. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes

1. Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination
5. The report of the sixth session of the Working Group will be submitted to the Commission.

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<sup>1/</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2, paragraph 179.

2. International statistical programmes

6. The report entitled "International statistical programmes, 1975-1979" (E/CN.3/444) would be updated to 1977-1981 at the tenth session of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. (For a discussion of the major statistical policy objectives included in the report, see paragraphs 80-82 below.) In this connexion, the group was informed that the ACC, at its sixty-fifth session, expressed satisfaction with the results of the ninth session (February 1975) of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities and the excellent quality of the report, and asked its Chairman to convey its appreciation to the Chairman of the Sub-Committee. It was generally felt by ACC that both the methods of work and the reporting practices of the Sub-Committee should be brought to the attention of other ACC subsidiary bodies with a view to their wider application within the ACC machinery.

B. Technical assistance for the improvement of statistics in the developing countries

1. Basic problems and issues

7. The view was expressed by the Working Group that there was a need to include an item on co-ordinating and rendering more effective statistical assistance to developing countries. The item should be concerned with the experience of countries in this regard, and the members of the Working Group from Brazil, Kenya and Malaysia agreed to submit country papers to the Commission, briefly summarizing what they viewed as the basic issues. The members also felt that, while it would not be possible to prepare documentation for the nineteenth session of the Commission on the establishment of continuing household sample survey capabilities, this work should receive high priority. In this connexion, a summary prepared by the Economic Commission for Africa on a proposed programme for establishing continuing household sample survey capabilities could be ~~presented~~ presented to the nineteenth session.

2. International technical assistance in statistics

8. The report entitled "International technical assistance in statistics, 1975-1979" (E/CN.3/446) will be updated to 1977-1981 at the tenth session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. For a discussion of resource use in technical assistance activities in statistics, see paragraphs 63-79 below.

C. Economic statistics

1. Price and quantity statistics

9. At the nineteenth session of the Statistical Commission, it is planned to present the following documentation: a background paper which has already been distributed on national practices in the collection and compilation of price and quantity statistics and a paper consisting of two parts: (a) guidelines on principles of a system of price and quantity statistics containing a discussion on purposes, framework, concepts, classifications, series to be collected and indexes

to be constructed, as well as general methodology of collection and compilation; and (b) problems of application of the principles to specific areas. It is anticipated that the guidelines will be fairly complete; however, the second part will not have reached that stage and will require further national and international discussion and study. For a discussion of the price statistics programme, see paragraphs 47-49 below.

## 2. Energy statistics

10. In response to contemporary world-wide interest, the Statistical Office has embarked on an accelerated programme of activities in this field. The high priority assigned to it is reflected in its 1976-1977 programme budget. The programme is being carried out in collaboration with the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional commissions, the World Bank and other interested international agencies. It includes the following elements: (a) expansion of the current Statistical Office annual publication, World Energy Supplies (Statistical Papers, Series J) to include a wider range of energy commodities and more thorough treatment of the conversion and end-use of these commodities; (b) improvement of the timeliness of this publication and the introduction of a new quarterly publication; (c) preparation of comprehensive balances of important energy commodities at the world, regional and national level and improvement of harmonization of existing statistics; and (d) elaboration of the conceptual framework for the further development and improvement of energy statistics.

11. For the nineteenth session of the Statistical Commission, a paper will be prepared on this conceptual framework with a view to standardizing and improving definitions, terminology and methodologies. A detailed description of the programme of extension of statistical work in this field will also be prepared for the Commission, either as an integral part of this paper or separately in the progress report on the work of the Statistical Office.

## 3. System of national accounts and balances

12. This topic is conceived as consisting of two items: (a) review of national accounts and balances; and (b) welfare-oriented supplements to the national accounts and balances. Regarding (a), the progress report of the Statistical Office will contain a section on plans and progress of a review of the national accounts and balances and the results of the Interregional Seminar on the System of National Accounts (see paragraphs 37-41 below). As regards (b), a report will be prepared on welfare-oriented supplements to the national accounts and balances. A consultant has been engaged to provide a critical review of ongoing work in this area in the United States of America, Japan and elsewhere. The review will focus on measures and indicators designed to improve international comparisons of levels of living between developing and developed economies, drawing on components of the system of national accounts and balances and the evolving system of social and demographic statistics. An expert group, composed of users and producers of statistics in these fields, will be convened in March 1976 to discuss the review and alternative indicators of levels of living <sup>7</sup> of welfare, to be prepared by the Statistical Office.

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4. Public sector statistics

13. It is intended to prepare two papers on public sector statistics. One paper will review the main problems and issues in the field of public sector statistics and the ways in which they might be resolved. That paper will draw on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) draft manual on government finance statistics, the United Nations Statistical Office (UNSO) draft manual on the public sector and the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the field of public sector statistics. The second paper will consist of a detailed classification of government purposes.

D. Social and demographic statistics

1. 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme

14. Administrative authority for the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme is contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1947 (LVIII) of 7 May 1975 requesting, inter alia, that the Secretary-General proceed with its development and make all necessary preparations, with the co-operation of the relevant United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, with a view to encouraging and assisting Member States to plan and carry out improved censuses between 1975 and 1984. It was the opinion of the Statistical Commission, at its eighteenth session, and the Council that the Programme was particularly important, inter alia, in view of the emphasis placed on population censuses in the World Population Plan of Action adopted by the World Population Conference at Bucharest, Romania in August 1974.

15. The Statistical Commission had accepted a proposal that the regional commissions should take the lead in developing recommendations with respect to the topics to be covered in their respective regions, since each regional commission has now had experience with at least one round of census topics, while the Statistical Office would undertake the compilation and analysis of national census material relating to organization, timing, staffing and costs of various census operations, with a view to preparing appropriate guidelines and recommendations in these matters. 2/

16. Accordingly, the regional commissions are being asked to query their Member States on their proposals for changes in the recommendations in the various regional variants of the Principles and Recommendations for the 1970 Population Censuses 3/ and the Principles and Recommendations for the 1970 Housing Censuses 4/ and to organize, during 1976 and 1977, working groups to discuss the national proposals and to make recommendations for changes. It is anticipated that the Inter-American Statistical Institute will follow much the same procedure.

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2/ Ibid., paragraph 58.

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.67.XVII.3.

4/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.67.XVII.4.

17. The regional recommendations on topics will be used by the Statistical Office as one input for the drafting of the world-wide recommendations for the 1980 censuses. Another input will be the study now being undertaken by the Statistical Office of national census experience, with emphasis on organization, timing, staffing and costs of the various census operations.

18. The Working Group felt that attention should be paid to intercensal demographic trends since significant developments could occur between census years. It pointed out that the 1980 census programme should be regarded as a means of strengthening statistical organization so that effort could be devoted to intercensal surveys.

19. A progress report on the 1980 census programme will be submitted to the nineteenth session of the Statistical Commission. It was suggested that the paper should also touch on data processing, reliability and other aspects of such data, identifying standards on which there appears to be a consensus. Furthermore, it was decided that a paper, to be prepared by the Working Group member from Kenya, would be submitted on the application of cartography in this area.

2. Promoting the improvement of social statistics in developing countries

20. This will be a strategy paper; a draft of it will be discussed at the October 1975 meeting of the Conference of African Statisticians, in Togo, and comments will be reflected in the paper submitted to the Statistical Commission.

3. Migration statistics

21. At its seventeenth session, in 1972, the Statistical Commission emphasized the need for international standards for statistics of international migration and expressed the view that international guidance on statistics of international migration could be valuable to countries in improving and expanding such data. The Commission reviewed draft recommendations on international migration statistics and draft guidelines on internal migration statistics. 5/

22. It felt, however, that the draft recommendations and guidelines required further work and that this could best be accomplished through the preparation of studies of national practices in the collection and compilation of both kinds of statistics.

23. Accordingly, the Statistical Office circulated a series of questionnaires to Governments, inquiring into their practices. On the basis of the replies received, synoptic tables have been prepared on practices in the definition, collection, compilation and publication of international migration statistics. These tables will shortly be circulated to national statistical offices for comment.

24. Preparation of the study of national practices in internal migration statistics is proceeding in the same way, with summary tables now being drawn up for circulation to national statistical offices for comment.

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25. At its nineteenth session, the Commission will consider two papers containing revised draft recommendations on international migration statistics and on internal migration statistics. A report prepared by a consultant on "brain drain" statistics will also be before the Commission (see paragraphs 57-62 below).

4. Tourism statistics

26. Draft simplified guidelines on tourism statistics are being completed and will be circulated in 1975 for comment to national and international statistical authorities. It is intended to present to the Commission a paper on the guidelines and another summarizing the comments received from countries and international bodies.

5. Social indicators (see 6 below)

6. System of Social and Demographic Statistics (SSDS)

27. Two papers will be prepared on the system as a whole: One - a strategy paper - will attempt, on the one hand, to summarize the work of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on common concepts and definitions and on links between the various subsystems; and, on the other hand, to outline the relationship of the future work by various working parties in Europe in the various individual spheres, such as health, education, demography etc. An attempt will be made to cast the strategy paper in such a way as to provide perspective for those working in individual spheres on how their work relates to that in the other spheres and to the evolution of a system as a whole. Specific attention will be given to work, actual or desirable, on testing and evaluating the framework and its implementation. The second paper will deal with a draft SSDS for developing countries. A consultant has completed a paper on this topic and it is now being revised for submission to an expert group that will be convened in November 1975 in New York. The paper for the Commission will be based on the consultant's paper, modified in the light of the conclusions of the expert group and of the comments received from developing countries. The paper "Draft guidelines on social indicators" (E/CN.3/450), discussed by the Commission at its eighteenth session, will be amended in the light of comments received. The amended version will be submitted to the Commission at its nineteenth session. The Commission will also have before it the report of the working group of the CES on this paper.

E. Environment statistics

28. Two papers will be submitted to the Commission on this topic. One will be an updated version of the paper prepared for the Working Group (see paragraphs 42-46). The other will deal with draft guidelines on the main features of the modules on energy and non-energy statistics of a system of environment statistics. The paper on this topic, prepared by a consultant, is now being reviewed. It will be available in 1975 for discussion by an informal group of rapporteurs of the Conference of European Statisticians and may be amended in the light of their discussion prior to submission to the Statistical Commission if time permits. It was hoped also to prepare a paper on an inventory of national work and future requirements and uses, as well as future plans of countries in the field of environment statistics. However, this information will not be available for consideration by the Statistical Commission.

F. International standard classifications

1. International Standard Classification of All Goods and Services (ICGS)

29. The Statistical Commission at its eighteenth session had before it a report on the ICGS, which explained how the classification was developed, the uses for which it is intended and the further work required for making it operational. The report also dealt with the correspondence between the ICGS and the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and the relationship between the ICGS and other international classifications.

30. The Commission requested that the report should be circulated to national and international organizations for comments and that the classification, revised in the light of comments received and further consultations, be submitted to the Commission at its nineteenth session.

31. The classification was the subject of intensive study at a meeting of a working group of the Conference of European Statisticians (February 1975). It will be considered by the Conference of African Statisticians in October 1975.

32. Present plans call for revision of the classification in the light of all these comments and consideration of the <sup>revised</sup> document by the Statistical Commission at its nineteenth session.

2. Expert group of consultants on standard international statistical classifications

33. The report of the expert group, as well as comments received from countries, will be before the Commission (see paragraphs 83-90 below).

G. Statistical organization

34. A report will be prepared drawing on the Handbook of Statistical Organization currently under preparation and on a special survey on organization undertaken by the Statistical Office. The report will deal with questions, inter alia, of the status of the statistical profession in developing countries and of the loss of personnel to other services.

H. Programme objectives: implementation and prospects

1. Regional conferences of statisticians and similar bodies

2. Statistical work of the specialized agencies

3. Statistical Office of the United Nations

35. Three reports of the Secretary-General, prepared in co-operation with the relevant agencies, will be submitted to the Commission.



I. Consideration of the draft provisional agenda for the  
twentieth session of the Commission

36. A draft provisional agenda will be presented to the Commission.

II. INTERREGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE  
SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS (SNA)

37. The Working Group was given an oral progress report on preparations for the seminar to be held at Caracas from 8 to 19 December 1975. Presently, 35 countries have expressed an interest in attending. The seminar is being financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supplemented by the Netherlands Trust Fund.

38. The main purpose of the seminar is to identify conceptual and practical problems met by developing countries in implementing the revised SNA and to consider solutions to those problems. In addition, improvements in the methods of estimation and the basic statistics used will be discussed.

39. Each country participant has been requested to provide a short statement on the experience of his country in applying the new SNA. The regional commissions, of the developing world, will be represented at the seminar.

40. The agenda for the seminar will cover the following topics: (a) over-all view of the structure of the revised SNA (and its relation to the MPS); (b) problems encountered in implementing the SNA as far as definitions, classifications, concepts and exposition are concerned and proposed procedures for solving the above problems; (c) statistical methods and problems: sources of data, methods of estimation, examples of special problems (separate sub-sections would cover (i) industries and enterprises, (ii) government, (iii) private non-profit bodies, (iv) households, and (v) external transactions); (d) priorities in implementing the SNA and in collecting basic data; (e) the SNA considered from the users' point of view; and (f) proposals for extending and improving the SNA in the light of emerging requirements.

41. The Working Group noted and welcomed the report on the seminar.

III. STATISTICS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

42. In accordance with the wishes of the Statistical Commission at its eighteenth session, "a review of the character and co-ordination of the activities of ... international agencies on statistics of the environment ..." 6/ was submitted to the Working Group (E/CN.3/AC.1/3).

*OR. E.C.O.I.C., 58th Session, Suppl. No. 2,*  
Cover 1 6/ ~~ibid.~~ paragraph 92 (d)(i).

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43. The Working Group was informed that the proposal to establish a joint task force of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities and of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Advisory Sub-Committee on Earthwatch had not yet been realized.

44. It was recalled by the Working Group that the Statistical Office had prepared proposals on a programme of environment statistics for consideration by UNEP and that UNEP had requested that the Statistical Commission review the proposals. The Commission had approved the programme at its eighteenth session.

45. The Working Group was informed of the various activities undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Office, UNESCO, WHO and FAO on environment statistics. With regard to the Statistical Office programme, a consultant has prepared a paper on draft guidelines dealing with material and energy balances. Included will be a discussion of the pollution generated and abatement costs in the case of energy and non-energy commodities. The Statistical Office, is responsible for the co-ordination of the contributions from the specialised agencies' documents for Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements to be held at Vancouver, Canada in 1976. The Office will also prepare a paper for the Conference on the statistics used in urban planning projects in Calcutta and Venezuela in order to illustrate the kinds of data required for this purpose. UNESCO at present has no specific programme on environment statistics but has included some environment questions in its biennial questionnaire on expenditure for research and experimental development. The FAO collects data on the current use of resources such as statistics on current land and water use in cultivated areas, grasslands, forests, fish stocks etc. No new work is being undertaken at this time. The WHO recently collected information on the status of community water supply and sewage disposal in developing countries and published it in World Health Statistics Report (vol. 26, No. 11, 1973). The questionnaire has been revised and will be used to collect data from 1975 onward.

46. However, the Working Group noted that some progress had been made since the eighteenth session of the Commission: (a) the specialized agencies had responded to the request to furnish information for the Working Group document; (b) steps had been taken to establish the joint task force with UNEP in order to improve the co-ordination efforts in that area; (c) classifications and concepts were being prepared by a consultant; and (d) preparatory work was being undertaken for Habitat. The Working Group expressed regret that lack of resources had precluded faster progress with respect to the main programme adopted by the Commission and urged that the necessary resources be provided by UNEP for this important work in the near future.

#### IV. PRICE

#### IV. PRICE STATISTICS PROGRAMME

47. The Working Group considered this item on the basis of an oral report. It was informed that there had been two meetings in 1975 on price statistics. In May, a Working Group of the Conference of European Statisticians considered price measurement in external trade and, in June, an expert group in New York dealt

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with a system of price and quantity statistics. The latter considered, inter alia, the proposed system of price and quantity statistics, problems in identifying price and quantity units, the collection of representative data, index formulae and the base period, some special types of indexes, special problems of price and quantity indexes in selected industries, wholesale and retail and producer and consumer price indexes, price and quantity indexes of final outlays and special problems of price and quantity indexes in international trade.

48. The Working Group was informed that the Statistical Office is preparing a background document on interagency activities in price statistics. The document, which emphasizes the need for harmonization of interagency activities, will be considered by the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities at its session in 1976.

49. The Working Group took note of the report.

#### V. INTEGRATED LIST OF STATISTICAL QUESTIONNAIRES

50. The Working Group considered this question on the basis of a note prepared by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/4). It recalled that at its fourth session it had suggested, and the Statistical Commission at its seventeenth session had agreed, that a list of the statistical questionnaires to be sent to national statistical authorities during a particular year should be drawn up.

51. The ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, at its eighth session (Rome, February 1974), had agreed that the preparation of an integrated list of statistical questionnaires would be a useful step towards further co-ordination. The draft integrated list of questionnaires was considered by the Sub-Committee at its ninth session (Paris, February 1975).

52. For each of the regular (recurrent) statistical questionnaires issued by the statistical divisions of the United Nations system, information is provided in two annexes on: (a) the topic covered, the general description of the questionnaire and the name of the publication(s) in which the series appear (annex I); and (b) the month of dispatch and the deadline date for return (annex II).

53. The Working Group was informed of the many examples of joint use of questionnaires within the United Nations system and between the United Nations system and other international organizations and the general interchange of data among organizations inside and outside the system. The Working Group felt that the problem of countries receiving international questionnaires which duplicated or overlapped one another had been substantially solved through a co-ordinated effort.

54. In this regard, it was pointed out that, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1281 (XLIII) on co-ordination and clearance of questionnaires, the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, as part of its regular activities, monitored the issuance of new statistical questionnaires. Co-ordination in this regard has been quite intensive.

55. The Working Group warmly welcomed the document as a significant step forward and indicated that they would like to discuss the item by means of supplements prepared for its biennial meetings. Furthermore, the Working Group felt that the document should be made available to central statistical offices.

56. It was agreed that copies of all statistical questionnaires sent to other than central statistical offices would be sent, as information copies, to the central offices. In this way, statistical offices could initiate contacts with other data-furnishing offices with a view to improving co-ordination.

#### VI. STATISTICS RELATING TO THE OUTFLOW OF TRAINED PERSONNEL FROM DEVELOPING TO DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

57. The Working Group considered this item on the basis of a note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/5). It was informed that in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1904 (LVII) of 1 August 1974, "Outflow of trained personnel from developing to developed countries", and particularly paragraph 5 dealing with the improvement of statistics on the migration of highly qualified persons, co-ordinated work is being undertaken at the international level on the statistical aspects of the study of this problem.

58. The work is being undertaken with the help of a consultant engaged by the Statistical Office in order to provide an input into the report of the Secretary-General to the Committee on Science and Technology, as requested by the Council.

59. In discussing this matter at its session in February 1975, the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities stressed three points in relation to statistics of the outflow of trained personnel. First, improvements in the statistics depend eventually upon national efforts. Secondly, efforts at the international level to encourage and facilitate improvements in the scope and quality of national statistics involve the work of a number of agencies in the United Nations system; the consultant would therefore consult all the interested agencies. Finally, the statistical issues relating to paragraph 5 of Council resolution 1904 (LVII) should most appropriately be dealt with by the Statistical Commission, its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities.

60. The Working Group was informed of the recent visits of the consultant to ECE, UNCTAD, the ILO, UNESCO and WHO and of the programmes currently carried out by them in this area.

61. The Working Group felt that improvement of statistics on the "brain drain" is but a relatively small element in the improvement of statistics of international migration. It was pointed out that this was an extremely difficult field of statistics. Censuses might provide a useful source. The view was also expressed that the relationship between salary levels in developed and developing countries is an important factor in the "brain drain".

62. The Working Group recognized that the Statistical Office was responding to a resolution of the Economic and Social Council on this extremely important question. It nevertheless felt that some caution should be exercised about raising expectations with regard to the feasibility of producing reliable statistics in this specialized field in the near future.

#### VII. RESOURCE USE IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES IN STATISTICS

63. At its eighteenth session, the Statistical Commission requested that its Working Group consider the "development, over a period of time, of suitable criteria for analysing the efficiency and effectiveness of resources used for technical assistance operations in statistics". <sup>7/</sup> The Working Group discussed this item on the basis of an oral report.

64. The Working Group was informed that since the eighteenth session of the Commission there had been considerable discussion of technical assistance activities. At the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, discussions were held on the co-ordination of field activities; in the Statistical Office, the whole range of issues concerning technical assistance have been intensively reviewed.

65. With regard to the efficiency of resources used for technical assistance, (i.e., whether the United Nations system is carrying out projects correctly), the Working Group was informed that there is a considerable amount of evaluation of the technical assistance programme that is carried out in an ad hoc manner as the occasion demands. Recently there was a survey of statistical training needs in Asia, carried out by the Asian Statistical Institute. At the moment a similar review is being planned in Africa through ECA. There are special review teams which periodically visit large-scale statistical projects or large-scale projects containing important statistical elements. Recent examples of this are in Indonesia, Malaysia and Haiti. There are also mid-term reviews of large-scale UNDP-financed projects. In the past few years such reviews have been carried out in the large-scale teaching projects in Tokyo, at Kampala and Rabat. There are also so-called tripartite reviews of smaller projects i.e., by UNDP, the Government and the technical adviser. All in all, there is a great deal of project evaluation, quite apart from the continuous technical guidance and response to experts' reports.

66. However, the question arises whether these reviews and evaluations are as effective as they might be. One obvious need is for a better information system for both management and evaluation of technical assistance projects. What is needed is a computer-based system that will supply summaries of project inputs and outputs, together with estimates of time and cost to completion. The Statistical Office has indicated to UNDP and the Office of Technical Co-operation that it would be prepared to participate in developing a project management and evaluation system if resources were made available.

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<sup>7/</sup> Ibid., paragraph 40.

67. In trying to evaluate the effectiveness of resources for technical assistance, i.e., whether the United Nations system is undertaking the right technical assistance activities, there are various partners: (a) the countries themselves; (b) individual agencies; and (c) the system as a whole. As regards (a), the question may be asked whether the process of country programming and bilateral assistance as currently executed is conducive to the most effective requests for assistance in statistics. With regard to (b), is each agency providing the right over-all programme of technical assistance and regular budget activities? Finally, concerning (c), is the system as a whole moving in the right direction and in a co-ordinated manner?

68. It was proposed that an international seminar composed of producers and users of statistics in developing countries might be convened to make a critique of the impact of technical assistance and consider ways and means for rendering it more effective. This would be followed, if necessary, by regional workshops on specific issues. The programme would require the financial support of UNDP. The ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities at its 1976 session would specify the scope and content of the proposal.

69. The Working Group, while recognizing that, ultimately, the countries must decide on the level of statistical activities, felt that international agencies should assist them in promoting the improvement of statistics. The Working Group also strongly felt that improved co-ordination, both at the national and international levels, would help considerably to raise the efficiency and effectiveness of such assistance. It would at least minimize the risk of duplication of effort and it would make the type of assistance much more satisfactory from the point of view not of solving specific problems, but rather of a more effective contribution to the development of the statistical system as a whole.

70. The Working Group felt that when projects that contain statistical elements are undertaken in a country, the central statistical office should be involved. It takes a great deal of time and effort to develop a statistical infrastructure with the expertise to deal with the many statistical problems that countries are faced with. Moreover, skilled resources are very scarce. It would, therefore, be much more efficient if the central statistical authorities were consulted in this regard and placed in a position to exercise a co-ordinating influence.

71. During the discussion, it was noted that statistical projects can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature, and that to consider qualitative projects as non-statistical could lead to serious problems.

72. The Working Group recalled that the Commission at its eighteenth session had also been concerned with the trend in the availability and quality of resources for technical assistance in statistics. There is a large number of vacant posts in fields such as computer applications, household surveys and censuses, training and national accounts. The primary reason for the vacancies is the scarcity of the required skills. The Statistical Office undertakes to provide highly skilled personnel which, of course, limits the possibilities. Furthermore, some countries are understandably reluctant to part with their skilled staff.

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73. The Commission was also concerned about the balance between equipment and other components of technical assistance. In this connexion, the Working Group noted that inputs into any projects - experts, fellowships, equipment - are primarily determined by the Governments involved. The UNDP was not in a position to influence countries in this regard, nor should it be.

74. The Working Group was pleased to note that the procedures surrounding approval for projects were becoming somewhat simpler. The UNDP now gives its "approval in principle", i.e., approval is given prior to completion of all the administrative details. None the less, the procedures were still quite complex and cut across many administrative divisions within the United Nations system. It hoped that, in time, there would be some streamlining.

75. The Working Group reiterated the view of the Commission that there is a real need for countries to establish three- to five-year plans and programmes for national statistical activities as integral parts of the national development plan. The plans should focus on data needs, personnel development and facility requirements and should, of course, be linked to the UNDP planning cycles. One such cycle is just ending and the new cycle covering 1977-1981 is beginning. Many country programmes are already in their initial planning stages, with final approval from the UNDP Governing Council expected from mid-1976 to 1978. It is very important for statistical offices to act at an appropriately early stage.

76. Finally, the Working Group was informed that an attempt will be made to include, in the next report to the Commission on technical assistance, an indication of the nature and magnitude of bilateral technical assistance.

77. In conclusion, the Working Group felt:

(a) That the field of statistics was not getting the priority it deserves both at the national and international levels and recommended that efforts should be made to rectify this;

(b) That greater efforts should be made to increase the awareness of decision-makers of the importance of statistics for social and economic planning, management and administration; and

(c) That reflecting the fact that integration of various projects is probably more important in statistics than in any other field, the need for co-ordination of technical assistance at the national as well as the international level is of the highest importance.

78. The Working Group recommended that the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities:

(a) Should attempt to develop proposals for improving co-ordination of technical assistance at both the national and international levels. The Working Group felt that it would be useful if the three country papers being prepared for the Commission (see paragraph 7) could deal, inter alia, with co-ordination of technical assistance activities as they see it;

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(b) Should consider ways which would help UNDP co-ordinate those of their projects which have statistical components;

(c) Should, with the help of UNDP, explore ways of better co-ordinating UNDP assistance with that given by bilateral donors so that no major survey is launched in a country without the concurrence of or, at the very least, consultation with the central statistical authority;

(d) Should improve the flow of information in order better to manage and evaluate technical assistance projects.

79. The Working Group also:

(a) Endorsed the proposal concerning an interregional seminar for 1977;

(b) Welcomed the initiatives concerning evaluation; and

(c) Expressed its appreciation that UNDP had been able to participate in its deliberations.

#### VIII. RELATIVE PRIORITIES OF THE MAJOR STATISTICAL POLICY OBJECTIVES

80. In accordance with a request from the Statistical Commission, the Working Group considered, on the basis of a note prepared by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/AC.1/6), the interrelationships and the relative priorities of the major statistical policy objectives adopted by the Commission at its eighteenth session. The note set out the six major statistical policy objectives to be used as guidelines for the work to be performed by the international organizations in developing international statistics in the period 1975-1979.

81. The Working Group noted that the statistical policy objectives and relative priorities were designed for the United Nations system as a whole and that, as a consequence, they had to be very broad. Nevertheless, some members felt that, in view of changing circumstances, they should be reviewed and that it would be useful to classify the programmes included in "International statistical programmes, 1977-1981" according to the major policy objectives.

82. The Working Group agreed that the Commission, in considering "International statistical programmes, 1977-1981", should discuss the major statistical policy objectives with a view to a reassessment of their scope and relative priorities, in the light of up-to-date developments.

#### IX. INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATIONS

83. The Working Group considered this item on the basis of oral reports. It was informed that an expert group of consultants had met in New York during September, October and November 1974 in order to make proposals on the whole range of

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complex problems involved in the harmonization of standard international statistical classifications.

84. The conclusions arrived at were of a short-run and long-run nature. In the short run, classifications would not change significantly. In the long run, the expert group recommended that the number of basic classifications be kept to a minimum. Thus, it proposed that an international standard commodity classification be developed as a basis from which all the commodity classifications required for different analytical purposes can be derived. Companion standard classifications of services and non-transportable goods were also proposed to complete the basic system of classifications covering all types of economic activity and products.

85. The Working Group noted that final proposals for the Ninth Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) have been circulated by the WHO secretariat to its member countries. The proposals will be reviewed by delegates to the International Revision Conference to be held 30 September to 6 October 1975 at Geneva. The report of the Conference, with the Ninth Revision annexed, will be submitted to the twenty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 1976 for adoption.

86. It is planned to publish the Ninth Revision by the end of 1976, one year before it is to come into effect.

87. The Working Group noted the progress made on the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) since the eighteenth session of the Statistical Commission. The draft ISCED was examined at a meeting of experts in December 1974 where its adoption and application were recommended, with some minor amendments.

88. A revised version of ISCED, taking into account the conclusions of the meeting, will be published in 1975. This revised version will then be considered by the International Conference on Education in August 1975, and, if adopted, will be submitted for final approval to the UNESCO General Conference in 1976.

89. The Working Group was informed that the ILO and UNESCO were preparing, for the 1976 session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, a background paper describing various issues involved in the preparation of an international standard classification of levels of skills for which there was a certain demand.

90. The Working Group took note of the reports.

#### X. DATE AND PLACE OF THE SEVENTH SESSION

91. The Working Group recommended that its seventh session should be held from 4 to 6 July 1977 at Geneva.

✓  
23.27  
July 1977



Annex

AGENDA

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Agenda of the Statistical Commission at its nineteenth session
4. Interregional Seminar on the System of National Accounts (SNA)
5. Statistics of the environment
6. Price statistics programme
7. Integrated list of statistical questionnaires
8. Statistics relating to the outflow of trained personnel from developing to developed countries
9. Resource use in technical assistance activities in statistics
10. Relative priorities of the major statistical policy objectives
11. International standard classifications
12. Date and place of the seventh session
13. Other matters
14. Adoption of the report

