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PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES: IMPLEMENTATION AND PROSPECTS

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Programme objectives, medium-term plan, 1978-1981, and work programme
of the Statistical Office of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General

1. This Conference room paper is a restricted document to be read in conjunction with E/CN.3/499.

I. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND WORK PROGRAMME OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR 1977-1978

2. The statistical programme includes collecting, compiling, evaluating and disseminating international statistics. It also fulfils the important role of assisting the Statistical Commission in the promotion of the standardization of statistical methods, classifications and definitions used by national statistical agencies in order to facilitate international comparability of the data and in the co-ordination of international statistical activities. In addition, the programme provides direct advice to Member States and substantive backstopping of technical assistance field projects in developing countries. All these activities are continuing and require sustained, long-term efforts. New world developments and new thrusts are, however, reflected in some shifts of emphasis and increased efforts to meet the demands arising from them.

3. The over-all legislative basis for this programme is contained in Economic and Social Council resolutions 8(I) and 8(II) and, most recently, the Council's decision 97 (LVIII) to take note of the report of the Statistical Commission on its eighteenth session and the programme objectives contained therein.

4. The specific activities to be carried out during the biennium 1977-1978 are described below, grouped by objective.

Objective No. 1: International Trade, Industry, Natural Resources and Energy

To provide more comprehensive, reliable and timely statistics on international trade, industry, natural resources, energy and related areas, with special emphasis on the needs of developing countries.

1.1 Reports and recurrent publications on industrial statistics

- (i) To collect data by questionnaires, process and publish them in consultation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the Yearbook of Industrial Statistics (Vol. I, General Industrial Statistics; and Vol. II, Commodity Production Data) and the Yearbook of Construction Statistics;
- (ii) To prepare indexes of industrial production and employment, as well as other contributions to the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.

1.2 Technical manuals on standards and methods for industrial statistics

- (i) To prepare and provide guidelines and standards for industrial, construction and distributive-trade statistics.

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1.3 Publications and tabulations on international trade statistics

- (i) To collect and compile international trade statistics in co-operation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the regional commissions; to compile price, unit value and quantum indexes, aggregates and trade matrixes;
- (ii) To prepare recurrent publications (Commodity Trade Statistics; Yearbook of International Trade Statistics; World Trade Annual and Supplement); tables for the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics; and ad hoc tabulations upon request.

1.4 Methods and classifications of international trade statistics

- (i) To develop further standard methods and classifications for international trade statistics in co-operation with the regional commissions, UNCTAD and the Customs Co-operation Council;
- (ii) To improve international trade statistics through reconciliation studies, based on reviews of the discrepancies of international trade statistics and other methods;
- (iii) To continue further work on linkages between the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC, Rev. 2) and other trade and related classifications.

1.5 Reports and recurrent publications on energy statistics

- (i) To collect, compile and disseminate, in co-operation with the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport, the regional commissions, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), more complete, accurate and timely energy statistics through World Energy Supplies (annual); Quarterly Bulletin of Energy Statistics (first issue, 1977); tables for the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics; ad hoc tabulations;
- (ii) To prepare, in co-operation with the Center for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport, the regional commissions, UNEP and the World Bank, international guidelines for the development of comprehensive and integrated energy statistics.

1.6 Matrixes of commodity flow by mode of transport and methods in transport statistics, in co-operation with the regional commissions and the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization

- (i) To prepare a revision of the International Standard Definitions for Transport Statistics; 1/

1/ Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 8.

- (ii) To prepare a compendium of transport statistics.

1.7 Concepts, definitions, classifications and methodologies for measuring tourism

- (i) To formulate concepts and definitions on statistics of tourism with the participation of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning and the regional commissions, in co-operation with UNCTAD and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), co-ordinated with statistics of international migration. To prepare these guidelines for publication;
- (ii) To prepare a manual on the methodology of statistics of tourism.

Objective No. 2: National Accounts, Income Distribution and Related Statistics

To develop further and implement the system of national accounts and balances and related systems and classifications and to provide more comprehensive and reliable statistics on national accounts and balances and related data such as the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation, with special emphasis on the needs of the developing countries.

2.1 Review and development of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and its linkages to the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS), with special attention to the needs of the developing countries

- (i) To review, with the participation of the regional commissions and the assistance of an ad hoc expert group, the SNA and its implementation in order to identify and remedy problem areas, devoting special attention to the needs of the developing countries in terms of both meeting their data requirements and providing clear and understandable reference materials, including a handbook of national accounting;
- (ii) To clarify further the relationships between SNA and MPS, through technical studies to identify structural relationships and develop common subaggregates, and through country case studies; to develop methods of approximation for countries and time periods for which complete data are not available.

2.2 Within the over-all framework of the national accounts, continued development of systems and standards for sectoral data

- (i) For the public sector, to prepare for publication, in consultation with the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the regional commissions, a manual emphasizing the relationship between data needed for government operations and data needed for economic and social policy and planning, and including a detailed classification of the purposes of government; to prepare a technical report on distributional aspects of public sector statistics, including their relation to the distribution of household income, consumption and accumulation;

- (ii) For enterprises, to complete the study of national practices in compiling financial statistics of enterprises and prepare a technical report; to review national practices in compiling economic census data on enterprises; to prepare guidelines on enterprise statistics and convene an ad hoc expert group to discuss them;
 - (iii) For the foreign sector, to review the relationship of data required for the national accounts and data required for balance of payments and international trade analysis.
- 2.3 Continued development of standards for related data, including flow of funds accounts, balance sheets and national wealth accounts, national accounts in constant prices, and links between economic accounts and other kinds of data, both economic and non-economic
- (i) To prepare and issue guidelines and manuals on flow of funds, balance sheets and reconciliation accounts, and stocks of tangible assets and other forms of national wealth, based where necessary on studies of country practices;
 - (ii) To prepare and issue guidelines and manuals on methods of deflation of national accounts and on the preparation of national accounts in constant prices;
 - (iii) To develop further the links to social and demographic data, through reviews of country practices and technical studies.
- 2.4 Development, updating and harmonization of standard international classifications related to the national accounts and balances
- (i) To complete and issue the International Standard Classification of All Goods and Services (ICGS);
 - (ii) To complete and issue the Classification of the Outlays of Industry and Purpose (COIP);
 - (iii) To continue work on the harmonization of statistical classifications in the economic sphere in co-operation with organizations within and outside the United Nations system;
 - (iv) To co-ordinate the classification work mentioned elsewhere, i.e., SITC, purposes of government, social and demographic data.
- 2.5 Collection, compilation and dissemination of national accounts statistics
- (i) To collect, compile and disseminate national accounting data through the Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics and through contributions to other statistical publications;
 - (ii) To prepare various calculations of national accounts series;

- (iii) To contribute through the above to the development of a comprehensive and reliable information base on national accounts statistics.

2.6 Statistics of the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation

- (i) For the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation, to prepare a technical study of concepts, definitions, and classifications; to update the review of country practices; to prepare for publication guidelines for developed and developing countries; to prepare a manual covering methods of estimation (including the use of household surveys), priorities and uses;
- (ii) To collect, compile and prepare for publication a report furnishing data and estimates on the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation.

Objective No. 3: Price Statistics and Related Areas

To develop further the methodology and collection of statistics on prices and related areas.

3.1 Improvement of methodology for price collection, index compilation and deflation through studies of national practices and development of guidelines and manuals

- (i) To prepare and issue guidelines on price and quantity statistics and manuals on producers' prices, consumers' prices and prices in international trade;
- (ii) To prepare a technical study of aspects of deflation of national accounts not previously covered, including wages and other income shares, economic depreciation and real wealth.

3.2 Development and extension of the International Comparison Project (ICP) and the collection of cost-of-living data for international civil service use

- (i) To implement phase III of the ICP, directed towards simplifying the methodology and extending the country coverage;
- (ii) To utilize the experience gained in ICP to improve the quality of international civil service measurement of the cost of living;
- (iii) To prepare a technical report on price index sample design and price collection methodology, making use of the results of ICP and the cost-of-living work.

3.3 Survey of the statistical aspects of countries' experience with indexation and preparation of a technical study

- 3.4 Development of a programme of international price statistics, in co-operation with the interested specialized agencies and the regional commissions

Objective No. 4: Social, Demographic and Environmental Statistics

To develop further, systematize and disseminate statistics in the social, demographic and environmental areas with special emphasis on the needs of the developing countries.

- 4.1 Continued work on standardization and integration of social and demographic statistics, including distributional aspects, through surveys of country practices and case studies, preparation of guides and manuals
- (i) To collect and collate the definitions, concepts and classifications used in different areas of social and demographic statistics, and prepare a technical report on their harmonization;
 - (ii) To prepare and issue guidelines on social indicators, based in part on case studies of their use by countries;
 - (iii) To conduct a survey of studies of time use, including conceptual problems and applications;
 - (iv) To monitor and issue reports on country experience in the development and application of integrated social and demographic statistics;
 - (v) To prepare a technical report on methods of development and use of integrated demographic, social and economic data bases derived from censuses, surveys and administrative data.
- 4.2 Guidelines on the concepts, contents and methodologies of environment statistics, emphasizing their relation to national accounts
- (i) To formulate guidelines on concepts, contents and methodologies for collecting environment statistics and to carry out studies on statistics of the natural and man-made environment;
 - (ii) To develop the international collection and compilation of these data;
 - (iii) To prepare an environmental statistics compendium.
- 4.3 Dissemination of demographic statistics
- (i) To collect, compile and disseminate demographic statistics through the Demographic Yearbook (and the special historical supplement to the 1978 Demographic Yearbook), the Population and Vital Statistics Report, (quarterly), the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook; as well as to develop the capacity to respond more effectively to ad hoc or highly specialized requests.

4.4 Guidelines for national efforts in collection of demographic statistics

- (i) To complete and publish a revised version of the Handbook of Population Census Methods; 2/
- (ii) To complete and publish recommendations on migration statistics;
- (iii) To prepare and publish a revised version of the Handbook of Vital Statistics Methods; 3/
- (iv) To prepare and publish recommendations, with the assistance of an ad hoc group of experts and in close co-ordination with the Population Division, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning and the regional commissions, for the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme;
- (v) To organize with the assistance of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, a series of training workshops in population and housing census methods to be carried out in close collaboration with the Population Division, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, the regional commissions and the regional statistical training institutes; and to organize an interregional workshop on methods for improving the collection of vital statistics through civil registration systems;
- (vi) To carry out related studies including the development of local area census statistics (census tract programme).

4.5 Methodological publications and statistical compendiums on social, housing and related statistics

- (i) To compile and publish the Compendium of Social Statistics, 1977;
- (ii) To initiate work on the Compendium of Housing Statistics, 1978;
- (iii) To revise and bring up to date, in collaboration with the specialized agencies and the regional commissions, the Handbook of Household Surveys; 4/
- (iv) To encourage needed revisions in the basic concepts used for the collection and compilation of demographic and social statistics so as to free them from inappropriate sex-based stereotypes by organizing a seminar involving users and producers of statistics dealing with this issue, by monitoring research carried out by Member States and by developing and disseminating appropriate guidelines;

2/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 58.XVII.6 (vols. I, II and III).

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 1955.XVII.1.

4/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 64.XVII.13.

- (v) To initiate the development of a curriculum in social statistics for training middle-level government statisticians.

4.6 Statistics on children and youth within the evolving framework of social and demographic statistics in co-operation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- (i) To prepare and publish country guidelines and provide direct assistance to developing countries to improve their social statistics on children and youth.

Objective No. 5: Improved Dissemination of Statistics

To improve the variety, timeliness and quality of the statistical output of the United Nations, including general statistical compendiums and special tabulations.

5.1 Compendiums of economic and social statistics

- (i) To issue, in close co-operation with the regional commissions and with the assistance of inputs from the specialized agencies, the Statistical Yearbook, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Pocketbook.

5.2 Development of a data base system for integrated storage of the Statistical Office's stock of data

- (i) To design and implement an integrated and flexible data processing system for storage and retrieval of statistical data, taking advantage of modern technology, and to establish a computer-based set of integrated coding systems for international statistical data processing;
- (ii) To use the new system to enhance the efficiency of publication of the recurrent statistical outputs including the Statistical Yearbook, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Pocketbook as well as to substantially improve the capability for responding to special requests.

5.3 Review and co-ordination of statistical publications and assessment of the quality of the data

- (i) To review the Statistical Office publications in order to increase their usefulness and to study the quality and assess the reliability of the data published therein with a view to improving them;
- (ii) To co-ordinate the contents of the Statistical Office publications with those of the regional commissions and the specialized agencies.

Objective No. 6: Co-ordination of International Statistical Programmes

To promote co-ordination of the international statistical system and to provide statistical services to other units within the Secretariat and to other United Nations bodies. The Statistical Office serves as a focal point for the international statistical system.

6.1 Co-ordination of the statistical programmes of the United Nations system

- (i) To provide substantive and technical servicing for the Statistical Commission and its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination;
- (ii) To provide substantive and technical servicing for the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC);
- (iii) To maintain close liaison with the statistical services of the regional commissions, specialized agencies, other intergovernmental and non-governmental statistical organizations and national statistical services;
- (iv) To publish regularly an interagency International Statistical Reporter in order to provide a source of information on important developments in international statistical activities;
- (v) To prepare and improve reports of integrated five-year plans of the regular and technical assistance activities of the international statistical system.

6.2 Construction of catalogues of economic and social statistics

- (i) To maintain, update and expand the Directory of International Statistics. 5/

6.3 Statistical services provided to General Assembly organs and other bodies, on request

- (i) To provide the Committee on Contributions with data on national income, exchange rates, population and other data;
- (ii) To provide substantive services and statistical expertise to various units of the Secretariat and other United Nations bodies, on request.

5/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XVII.11.

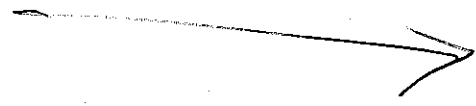
Objective No. 7: Improvement of Statistical Capability of Developing Countries

To assist developing countries, through advisory and technical co-operation activities, to further develop their statistical capability and the statistics they need for monitoring and directing their economic and social development.

- 7.1 Assistance to developing countries in improving their statistical organization (including the preparation of studies and manuals on organization) and provision of backstopping for the statistical training centres sponsored by the United Nations
- (i) To assist in setting up continuing household survey capabilities and vital registration systems;
 - (ii) To assist in developing statistics in the fields of energy, mineral resources, trade and national accounts;
 - (iii) To assist in the implementation of population and housing censuses and in the preparations for the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme;
- 7.2 Assistance to developing countries in initiating and developing their capability to use computer technology for statistical and related data processing applications
- (i) To assist developing countries in planning and organizing their statistical and related data processing activities and in establishing and improving their computer facilities for recording, storing and processing data;
 - (ii) To provide guidelines, manuals and methodology, including computer software, for applying computer technology to statistical and related applications;
 - (iii) To encourage and facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge of computer technology among developing countries and to assist in the training of staff.
- 7.3 Development of guidelines for designing, organizing and implementing household and related surveys
- (i) To obtain information, in co-operation with the regional commissions, through questionnaires concerning sample surveys and their analysis;
 - (ii) To prepare another report on Sample Surveys of Current Interest and volume III of A Short Manual on Sampling, covering the operational aspects of sample surveys.

II. MEDIUM-TERM PLAN OF THE STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR 1978-1981

5. The medium-term plan shown below is extracted from chapter XXIII (Statistics) of the Medium-Term Plan for the Period 1978-1981, 6/



6/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 6A (A/31/6/Add.1, vol. I), paras. 1874-1940.

CHAPTER XXIII

STATISTICS

ORGANIZATION

1874. The description of the organization of the major programme contained in paragraphs 1152 to 1156 of the medium-term plan for the period 1976-1979 1/ remains valid except for the following changes:

(a) The Statistical Office includes two central staff units: a Systems Development and Programming Unit in charge of computer system design and programme maintenance and an Internal Integration and Regional Liaison Unit in charge of internal integration and planning, co-ordination of technical co-operation activities and liaison with regional commissions;

(b) The first edition of a major publication, Directory of International Statistics, has been completed. It contains: (i) descriptions of the international statistical services of the United Nations system and of other organizations doing important work in international statistics; (ii) a list of international statistical series compiled by the United Nations system, along with a comprehensive bibliography of the recurrent publications in which they are contained; (iii) a list of international standards, concepts, definitions and recommendations with published sources; and (iv) an inventory of the computerized data bases of economic and social statistics in the United Nations system. By providing a comprehensive picture of the responsibilities and statistical outputs produced by the various members of the United Nations system, this publication contributes to strengthening co-ordination. Work will continue to expand the Directory to cover more fully the activities of the international statistical system and thereby amplify its usefulness for co-ordination;

(c) At the annual meetings of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities papers on numerous topics of mutual concern are prepared for discussion and, where appropriate, joint action. For example, among the topics included in the agenda for the 1976 meetings are the following:

- (i) Review of international technical assistance in statistics, 1977-1981;
- (ii) Review of international statistical programmes, 1977-1981;
- (iii) Proposed interregional seminar of producers and users of statistics in developing countries;
- (iv) Review of international work on income distribution;

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirtieth Session, Supplement No. 6A (A/10006/Add.1).

- (v) International work on statistics of the environment;
- (vi) International price statistics programme;
- (vii) Data banks of economic and social statistics.

Statistical programme

1875. Timely quantitative information, properly organized, is an essential ingredient in decision-making at every level. Without statistical information on the current state and past trends of the situations with which they are dealing, planners, policy-makers and administrators cannot carry out their functions in an efficient or rational manner. An example is the area of energy. Detailed statistics are needed on reserves, production, trade, consumption and cost of energy commodities as well as on the relation of energy to the general economy. Increasing concern about energy stems from its widespread impact on the interrelationships of economies. Rising costs and shifting relationships among the prices of different forms of energy have an immediate impact on industrial activity and permeate virtually all other aspects of economies. The search for alternative sources of energy, reorientation of investment and changes in patterns of demand all reflect directly developments in the energy sector. Likewise patterns of world trade and the balance of payments positions of exporting and importing countries are affected. On another level, energy is closely related to environmental concerns and information is needed on the environmental impact of the production, transformation and use of commodities and the costs of pollution and its abatement. To study these questions, related data are needed on industry, trade, manpower, income and a host of other areas, and all these data must be sufficiently comparable to permit interrelated analyses. Definitions, classifications and methodologies should be consistent not only among the various parts of the statistical system, but also, as far as possible, over time so as to facilitate analysis of change. The development of a statistical base for informed decision-making at all levels is necessarily a continuing, evolving process both within individual countries and throughout the world and the international organizations fill an important function in this process.

1876. The procedures, methodologies and technology needed to create the required statistical data base for countries are of general applicability and can be largely transferred from one country to another. The activities of the international organizations in the field of statistics can help countries to improve their statistical systems by offering guidance on the type of information to be collected, the survey design needed to produce reliable data, practical collection procedures, efficient data processing and editing techniques and the possible range and content of the final statistical output. They can facilitate the transfer of technology by gathering, systematizing and consolidating the methodologies developed throughout the world and then making them available both through preparation of technical materials, such as manuals and classification systems, and through technical assistance.

1877. Beyond methodology, the international organizations play a unique role in the gathering and dissemination of statistical data on a world-wide basis. Countries are intimately related to one another through their imports and exports, the movement of people, the interdependence of prices, the effects of pollution, the

sharing of knowledge, and in innumerable other ways. By putting its own data into an international context, each country can perceive perspectives that cannot be obtained in any other way.

1878. For such uses, statistical information is needed in internationally standardized, comparable form. It is to each country's advantage, for its own internal purposes that such standardization should occur, but it is only the international organizations, working in concert with one another, who can develop the international standards and assist countries in their implementation. In doing so, they will of course be providing better data for decision-making for international as well as national use.

1879. The process of development of such international systems, guidelines and standard classifications usually follows a regular pattern. National Governments express their needs for revised or new standards through the Statistical Commission or the regional conferences of statisticians. The first step in responding to such requests is a comparative study of country practices on the basis of which a draft of the new or revised system, guidelines or classification is prepared, if necessary with the assistance of a consultant or on the advice of an expert group. In all cases the drafts are widely circulated for comment or discussion to international and regional meetings of government statisticians (Statistical Commission and its working groups, regional conferences, regional working groups and so on) to international agencies, the regional commissions, and to national statistical offices. A revised version of the document based on the comments received is prepared for submission to the Statistical Commission which may give it final approval and recommend to countries that they adopt the system, guidelines or classification, or indicate that further work is required. After a number of years systems, guidelines or classifications which have been implemented are brought up to date in the light of experience.

1880. The objectives and outputs of the statistics programme reflect the resolutions of the General Assembly, especially of its sixth and seventh special sessions, the resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and the recommendations of the Statistical Commission, the regional commissions and other international bodies, keeping in mind the evolving and interrelated character of the statistical systems.

PROGRAMME 1: STATISTICAL OFFICE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

SUBPROGRAMME 1: INTERNATIONAL TRADE, INDUSTRY, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

(a) Objective

1881. The objective of this subprogramme is to provide more comprehensive, reliable and timely statistics on international trade, natural resources, energy, industry and related areas, with special emphasis on the needs of developing countries.

(b) Problem addressed

1882. To assess and monitor efforts to improve the foreign trade position, to diversify the exports and to raise the foreign trade earnings of developing

countries, it is necessary to construct appropriate indexes of prices of exported commodities in relation to imports, to keep under review trends of the terms of trade of developing countries, and so on. Available statistics require improvement to better serve such purposes and it has become urgent to develop more detailed, more reliable and prompter data on the trade flows of the appropriate commodities and their related prices and to extend their coverage. Improvements are also needed in related transport and shipping statistics. The widespread concern about energy and natural resources has brought forward the need for reliable and timely information on energy and primary commodities. There are insufficient statistics on production, imports and exports; data on reserves, stocks and consumption need to be developed further, and national, regional and global balances of important energy-type and primary commodities need to be prepared.

1883. Now that new emphasis is being placed on industrialization of developing countries, statistics on industry, construction and distributive trades in many of these countries should receive urgent attention. The data which are available are often insufficiently detailed and late. This situation points to a need for greater efforts towards the development of more extensive and timely collection of statistics in these fields.

(c) Legislative authority

1884. The principal authority for these activities is to be found in the following: Statistical Commission, reports of the seventeenth session, 2/ para. 198, and eighteenth session, 3/ paras. 98-104; General Assembly resolutions 3201 (S-VI), 3202 (S-VI) and 3362 (S-VII).

(d) Strategy and output

1885. The strategy will consist of the continued preparation of recurrent publications, the extension of the data files and the preparation of methodological studies in co-operation with, as appropriate, other divisions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional commissions, UNCTAD, GATT, the Customs Co-operation Council, UNIDO, UNEP, IBRD, IMF, OECD and other organizations. The strategy elements are the following:

(a) Collection, compilation and dissemination of international trade, energy, industrial and related statistics through the following publications: Commodity Trade Statistics (50 issues per year); Yearbook of International Trade Statistics, World Trade Annual and its Supplement, World Energy Supplies (Series J) (annual), Quarterly Bulletin of Energy Statistics, Growth of World Industry (annual), Yearbook of Construction Statistics (annual), a compendium presenting the results of the 1973 world programme of industrial statistics, the introduction of a quarterly bulletin of mineral and metal statistics, Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and Statistical Yearbook. The extension of the computer-based data files and the introduction of microfiches will improve accessibility, include new countries and provide more complete and more timely data for all reporting countries;

2/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-fourth Session Supplement No. 2 (E/5236).

3/ Ibid., Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5603).

(b) For international trade, analytical information will be provided through aggregates at regional and subregional levels, the construction of commodity trade matrixes and indexes of terms of trade and detailed indexes of prices, unit values and quanta in conjunction with subprogramme 3. Special tabulations on shipping and transport will be prepared. A reconciliation project, started in 1975, consisting of analysing the differences in trade data reported by partner countries will be extended with a view to rendering statistics more meaningful. Further work on linkages between the revised Standard International Trade Classification (SITC, Rev.2), adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-ninth session, and other trade and related classifications will continue;

(c) An important extension of industrial statistics will be the collection of the quantity and value of gross output of selected commodities, of selected materials and fuels consumed in their production and of stocks of selected materials, fuels and finished goods. Detailed studies will be undertaken designed to construct, for major industrial and energy type commodities, balances of reserves and stocks, production, trade and consumption, as well as their prices. Also a new world programme of basic industrial surveys for 1983 will be prepared towards the end of the medium-term plan and a new issue of the Bibliography of Industrial and Distributive Trade Surveys will be published;

(d) International guidelines and methodological manuals for statistics on external trade, transport and shipping, tourism, energy, industry, distributive trades and construction, including handbooks on the organization and conduct of industrial surveys, will be developed or brought up to date and published.

(e) Expected impact

1886. The work described above will lead to a substantial improvement and expansion of the scope and coverage of available statistical data in international trade, energy, natural resources, industry and related statistics during the medium-term plan period. In particular, it is expected that during this period data for developing countries will expand more rapidly than before, thus making available more timely, detailed and comprehensive data for purposes of national policy formulation and planning and for the purpose of analysing problems involved in attaining the goals of industrialization. The adoption by an increasing number of countries of international standards on methods and procedures will contribute to the collection and dissemination of internationally comparable statistics for use in international policy formulation and monitoring.

SUBPROGRAMME 2: NATIONAL ACCOUNTS, INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND RELATED STATISTICS

(a) Objective

1887. The objective of this subprogramme is to develop further and implement the system of national accounts and balances and related systems and classifications and to provide more comprehensive and reliable statistics on national accounts and balances and related data such as the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation, with special emphasis on the needs of developing countries.

(b) Problems addressed

1888. Governments need, for evaluating economic and social conditions and for use in making policy decisions and planning, the kinds of information encompassed in the national accounts. A continuing review is needed to ensure that the national accounts meet the current needs of policy-makers and planners, and that countries are able to implement the system. Data which are at once relevant and valid are required to study the recent world-wide experience of inflation combined with widespread underutilization of capacity. Increasing interest has lately centred upon issues relating to economic equity, for the analysis of which statistics on the distribution of income and wealth are essential. These statistics represent a major gap, particularly in many developing countries, where what exists is of doubtful value, being based for the most part on limited household surveys collected for other purposes. Methods must be developed to make the storage and retrieval of the data that is collected more flexible, timely and responsive. The role of the public sector is of increasing importance, with a corresponding interest in more detailed, more reliable, and better organized data. Problems of capital financing point to a need for expansion of the system in this direction. Many developing countries are not yet in a position to issue up-to-date estimates of national accounts and related estimates. Thus in early 1976 the latest available figure of gross domestic product for 17 developing countries was 1969 or earlier, and for 22 others it was 1970 or 1971.

(c) Legislative authority

1889. The principal authority is to be found in Statistical Commission reports of the seventeenth session, 4/ paras. 85-90 and 195 (a,b,c,d,e,g), and of the eighteenth session, 5/ paras. 137, 143 and 149.

(d) Strategy and output

1890. The strategy elements involved in pursuing this objective include the review of the present systems, their augmentation to include new types of data, the elaboration of sectoral data, the further specification of standard classification systems, the expansion of data collection activities and the establishment of a computerized data base.

(i) Review of the System of National Accounts

1891. The System of National Accounts (SNA) provides the basis of work in national economic accounting in most countries with market economies, as does the System of Material Balances of the National Economy (MPS) in countries with centrally planned economies. Since the adoption of the SNA in 1968, much experience has accumulated in its application, both in industrialized and in developing countries. On the basis of this experience, a thoroughgoing review will be undertaken of the system and the tools for its use. Problem areas will be identified and remedied, either by adjustment of the system where that seems needed or by the provision of additional explanatory materials in the form of

4/ Ibid., Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5236).

5/ Ibid., Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5603).

manuals, guides, and reviews of country practices. Particular attention will be devoted to meeting the needs of developing countries, both in terms of special data requirements and in terms of clear and understandable reference materials. Effort will also be devoted to further clarifying the relationships between the SNA and the MPS in order to facilitate analysis where comparison of the two systems is needed.

(ii) Augmentation of the scope of the system

1892. Augmentation of the scope of the system will continue to include such fields as flow of funds accounts, balance sheets and national wealth accounts, input-output tables, problems of deflation and the compilation of national accounts in constant prices, and the development of links between the economic accounts and other kinds of data, both economic and non-economic. The latter will emphasize especially the relationships of economic to social and demographic data. In some fields, e.g. balance sheets and tangible capital assets, the work is sufficiently advanced so that the next steps will be the preparation of guidelines and manuals. In other fields, especially those dealing with links to other bodies of data, much more exploratory work is required. In these areas reviews of country practices will make an important contribution and technical studies based on these reviews will be undertaken.

(iii) Sector accounts for all sectors

1893. Within the framework of the existing accounts and balances, work will continue on the elaboration of individual sectors. In particular, this will include, for the household sector, the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation. It is in this area that links with social and demographic data are especially important; distributions are needed not only by income classes, but also for various social and demographic groups - for example urban and rural, by occupation, by sex and by age. Work is needed on concepts, definitions and classifications. Studies of country practices will be undertaken and guidelines will be prepared for both developing and developed countries. For the government sector, further work is in progress on the development of classification systems and on links with other data. A detailed classification of the purposes of government expenditures will be issued. In conjunction with the International Monetary Fund, manuals will be prepared on government finance and public sector statistics that will emphasize the relationship between the data needed for government operations and data needed for economic policy and planning. For the enterprise sector, work on financial statistics for enterprises is still in an exploratory stage. Studies of country practices will be completed and a technical report will be prepared. On the basis of these results, it should be possible to proceed to the preparation of guidelines and manuals.

(iv) Development of classifications

1894. The development of classification systems lies behind all areas of statistical analysis; they are fundamental to progress in the actual implementation of any orderly data collection programme. In addition to the classifications for specific purposes mentioned above, work will continue on the more general classification systems. In addition to the work on the revised Standard International Trade Classification (SITC Rev.2) already mentioned under subprogramme 1, the International Classification of All Goods and Services will

be completed and exploratory work on the harmonization of statistical classifications in the economic sphere will be continued.

(v) The collection of national accounts data

1895. The collection of data on national accounts will be expanded, both in terms of coverage, quality and timeliness of the types of data now collected, and in terms of new kinds of data. Reliability studies will be undertaken, including surveys of sources and methods, with a view to improving the quality of the data that is collected. As it becomes possible, the improved and expanded data will be reflected in the Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, the Statistical Yearbook, and the Year Book of Labour Statistics (ILO).

(e) Expected impact

1896. The extension of the system of national accounts into new areas and its elaboration in terms of concepts, definitions and classifications, together with the specification of its relationship to other areas of statistics will contribute to a better understanding and monitoring of important economic and social problems. Better means for the measurement of the distribution of income and consumption and expanded data in this area will help government policy planners in dealing with the inequality problems associated with the process of economic development. Better financial information resulting from expanded work on flow of funds accounts, balance sheets and the financial accounts of enterprises will contribute to the analysis of the process of saving and capital formation. Increased attention to the preparation of methodological and explanatory materials will assist countries in implementing the national accounts and related systems, and help them improve the quality and timeliness of their data. While the main effort on international systems development is directed towards meeting country needs, international users will also be greatly served by expansion of the data collection.

SUBPROGRAMME 3: PRICE STATISTICS AND RELATED AREAS

(a) Objective

1897. This subprogramme's objective is to develop further the methodology and collection of statistics on prices and related areas.

(b) Problems addressed

1898. The world-wide problem of inflation coupled with lagging output has focused new attention on the problems of price and output behaviour and the relation between them. The data now available are inadequate for the analysis of the process of inflation as it is transmitted through the economy, for the construction of reliable estimates of national accounts in constant prices and other quantity indexes that can be used for the analysis of productivity, for monitoring the considerable and frequent changes in import and export prices of natural resources and industrial primary commodities relative to those of manufactured goods. The data for making international comparisons in such areas as purchasing power and production costs are inadequate. Although price statistics were among the earliest kinds of economic data collected, their present

form is often quite disorganized; systematization of the collection of price statistics is a necessary ingredient in the effective analysis of the inflationary process.

(c) Legislative authority

1899. The principal authority is to be found in General Assembly resolution 3362 (S-VII) and Statistical Commission report on its seventeenth session, 6/ paras. 89, 195 (e).

(d) Strategy and output

1900. The strategy elements involved in pursuing this objective include both further development of methodology and expansion of data collection.

(i) Methodology

1901. The methodology of price collection, index compilation and deflation will be improved through studies of national practices in compiling price and quantity statistics and in preparing national accounts in constant prices, through the formulation of guidelines, the development of manuals, and experimental direct data collection.

(ii) Collection of price data and indexes

1902. Collection from countries of producer and consumer price data, price and quantity indexes, and national accounts data at constant prices is a part of the permanent task of the Statistical Office and has been performed for many years. During the medium-term plan period, the number and quality of price series and indexes collected and published in the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics will be increased.

1903. Collection and compilation of price and quantity data and indexes on exports and imports will be improved by expanding the coverage to more countries, increasing the detail, and improving the timeliness of publication of data, especially for developing countries.

(iii) International comparison project

1904. Work on the international comparison project will be continued. This project involves detailed collection, under international direction, of prices in all areas of final use, and their transformation into indexes of purchasing power. The work of the project makes possible comparisons among countries with a degree of validity not otherwise obtainable. During the medium-term plan period the project will enter a new phase, directed towards simplifying the methodology so that the number of countries covered can be greatly expanded.

(iv) Cost-of-living surveys

1905. Data on cost of living in various countries has been gathered for many years for international civil service use. In the future, an effort will be made to take advantage of the experience gained in the international comparison

6/ Ibid., Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5236).

project to improve the quality of these cost-of-living measurements. At the same time, the cost-of-living data collection will be used to supplement the data compiled by the International Comparison Project.

(e) Expected impact

1906. The methodological work contemplated in the medium-term plan should make it more feasible to relate price fluctuations to changes in patterns of output and expenditure. The work done in the international comparison project will advance understanding of relative price structures and their impact upon output, levels of consumption and internal and external trade. The expanded international data collection and publication will make available new information for monitoring and analysing changes in prices, their interrelationships, their impact upon the distribution of income and the level of output and the differing impact of the inflationary process upon different countries and different groups or regions within countries.

SUBPROGRAMME 4: SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

(a) Objective

1907. This subprogramme's objective is to develop further, systematize, and disseminate statistics in the social, demographic and environmental areas with special emphasis on the needs of developing countries.

(b) Problems addressed

1908. In recognition of the growing concern with issues related to the quality of life and social equity, new initiatives are needed to improve social, demographic and environmental statistics. Statistics in these fields have tended to develop in a more piecemeal manner than economic statistics, where the national accounts have exerted an integrating influence for some time. Efforts by national statistical agencies to improve these statistics are often handicapped by a lack of authoritative and relevant information about the experience of other countries making similar efforts. National statistical services frequently produce data whose timeliness, accuracy and detail fail to meet the basic needs of the relevant policy-makers and programme administrators. The situation is particularly critical in developing regions where the statistical services tend to be the weakest and the problems posed by development and social and demographic change are usually the most acute. Little work has been done in the complex and wide-ranging field of environmental statistics. For example, there is an absence of international guidelines and a lack of information of what statistics countries need, collect or plan to collect.

(c) Legislative authority

1909. The principal authority for the above activities is to be found in Economic and Social Council resolutions 1307 (XLIV) and 1564 (L) requesting the "Secretary-General to undertake a world programme for the improvement of vital statistics; Economic and Social Council resolution 1566 (L) requesting, *inter alia*, the Secretary-General to undertake ... concerted action to assist developing countries in strengthening their statistical systems as the basis for their development plans

and in the evaluation of their ... social progress"; Economic and Social Council resolution 1947 (LVIII) requesting "the Secretary-General to proceed with the development of the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme, to be carried out during the period 1975-1984"; Statistical Commission report of its eighteenth session, 7/ paras. 68-85 and 86-92.

(d) Strategy and output

1910. The improvement and better integration of social and demographic statistics and the development of environmental statistics is a long-term process requiring the continuing attention of both the users and producers of these statistics, depending primarily on national efforts. Nevertheless, work at the international level and its outputs contribute significantly to this process in several ways.

1911. One means of counteracting the piecemeal nature of many aspects of social statistics is to develop standard concepts and classifications for statistical use. In this way, national and international statistics covering the various fields of social concern (for example, education, employment, health, housing, population) can be compiled and examined in a comprehensive manner. International recommendations and guidelines for social and demographic statistics, by providing specific examples of properly integrated statistical concepts, classifications and methods, stimulate the producers and users of statistics in individual countries to re-examine the procedures they use with a view to improving them. Since international recommendations are based on a distillation of national practices and experience throughout the world, such recommendations are properly seen as a vehicle for transferring knowledge and technology between countries, with special benefit to those countries with less developed statistical systems. A more concrete instance of transfer of technology is the work carried out in connexion with the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme and the revision of the Handbook of Household Surveys.

1912. The strategy elements and outputs involved in reaching the objective are the following.

(i) Integration and improvement of social statistics

1913. This includes the preparation, in co-operation with the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the regional commissions and relevant specialized agencies, and the publication of reports providing guidance on the improvement and further integration and use of social and demographic statistics in developing and developed countries, including distributional aspects, social indicators and related work on classifications and concepts essential for assisting countries to develop integrated statistical systems capable of satisfying national requirements for assessing social conditions and trends.

1914. It will also require the encouragement, in co-operation with the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, of needed revisions of basic concepts used in the collection

7/ Ibid., Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5603).

and compilation of statistics so as to free them from inappropriate sex-based stereotypes by monitoring research carried out in member States, by organizing a seminar involving users and producers of statistics dealing with this issue, and by developing and disseminating appropriate guidelines.

(ii) Demographic statistics methods

1915. This will require the formulation and presentation of guidelines for national efforts of collection of demographic statistics through the preparation and publication of a revised version of the Handbook of Population Census Methods; final revision and publication of recommendations for the 1980 World Population and Housing Census Programme as approved by the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session; organization, with the assistance of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, of a series of training workshops in population and housing census methods to be carried out in close collaboration with the Population Division, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, the regional commissions and the regional statistical training institutes; and the organization of an interregional workshop on methods for improving the collection of vital statistics through civil registration systems.

(iii) Collection, compilation and dissemination of demographic statistics

1916. This includes the collection, compilation and dissemination of demographic statistics through the Demographic Yearbook and the Population and Vital Statistics Report, Series A (quarterly), the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook, as well as the development of the capacity to respond more effectively to ad hoc or highly specialized requests.

(iv) Methodology and compilation on social and housing statistics

1917. This includes the preparation of methodological publications and statistical compendia on social, housing and related statistics: compiling and publishing the Compendium of Housing Statistics (1978 and 1981) and thereafter at three-year intervals with increased attention being given to presenting statistics on related environmental conditions; revising and bringing up to date in collaboration with the specialized agencies and the regional commissions the Handbook of Household Surveys (1980); initiating work during the second half of the medium-term period on the fourth issue of the Compendium of Social Statistics planned for publication in 1982.

(v) Environmental statistics

1918. This includes the formulation of guidelines on the concepts, contents and methodologies of environmental statistics and compilation of environmental statistics in close co-operation with and assistance of UNEP and with the participation of the regional commissions and interested specialized agencies.

1919. Other work in the area of social and demographic statistics will include: the carrying out of related studies including the development of local area census statistics (census tract programme); the undertaking of studies of national practices in social statistics; the development and dissemination of curricula material in social statistics for training middle-level government personnel; the undertaking of demonstration field projects and the dissemination

of material aimed at assisting developing countries to improve their social statistics on children and youth (with the assistance of UNICEF).

(e) Expected impact

1920. If the national statistical authorities are provided with up-to-date information on new methodologies pertinent to census and survey operations, including computer technology and improved methods of questionnaire design, countries, particularly developing countries, will benefit from new technological developments and avoid costly mistakes.

1921. The medium-term outputs involving training activities (the organization of training workshops for population and housing census methods and the development of curricula material in social statistics) are designed to contribute to the building of a cadre of appropriately trained statistical personnel in developing countries and thereby lessen the dependence of these countries on international technical assistance.

1922. Those outputs related to the compilation and dissemination of demographic, social and housing statistics are designed to meet the evolving needs of Governments, international agencies, research workers and academic institutions throughout the world, and the United Nations Secretariat for authoritative, timely, and carefully compiled national statistics in these fields.

1923. A wide range of environmental statistics will provide an important tool to countries and the international community to monitor, assess and interpret the environmental conditions and to deal with the related problems.

SUBPROGRAMME 5: IMPROVED DISSEMINATION OF STATISTICS

(a) Objective

1924. The objective of this subprogramme is to improve the variety, timeliness and quality of the statistical output of the United Nations, including general statistical compendia and special tabulations.

(b) Problems addressed

1925. Major efforts are required to provide more comprehensive, reliable and timely information to policy-makers and planners by reducing the delay in the publication of statistics by improving their comprehensiveness and reliability and by responding quickly and effectively to requests for unanticipated tabulations and analytical cross-classifications.

1926. At the present time, when special requests for information are received they can only be met with difficulty and with the application of large amounts of resources. In part this problem stems from the fact that the data files and computer programmes of the Statistical Office were structured to produce specific publications and do not permit fast and efficient retrieval of data to meet special requests. In addition, some statistical office publications are still produced manually or are only partly computerized, again making the extraction of data to meet specific requests a lengthy and arduous task. The present computer arrangements also hinder a full exchange of machine-readable data between the

Statistical Office of the United Nations and other statistical agencies. Efforts are required to improve interchange and joint use of machine-readable data and to ensure that duplication is avoided.

(c) Legislative authority

1927. The principal authority for these activities is to be found in the reports of the seventeenth session (para. 42) 8/ and eighteenth session (paras. 28-32, 105-108) 9/ of the Statistical Commission which, inter alia, call on the Statistical Office to:

(a) Expand the coverage of statistical data particularly with respect to developing countries;

(b) Improve the timeliness of the data;

(c) Broaden the dissemination of the statistical publications of the United Nations, especially in developing regions;

(d) Proceed as quickly as possible with the plan to redesign data files and computer programmes into an integrated and flexible system which would facilitate the quick and easy retrieval of data in various unanticipated forms.

(d) Strategy and output

1928. The strategy elements involved in reaching this objective are:

(a) The design and implementation of an integrated and flexible computer system taking advantage of modern technology and the establishment and use of a computer-based set of integrated coding systems for international statistical data processing and the inclusion of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook data in the general computer system;

(b) The enhancement of the efficiency of publication of the recurrent statistical outputs including the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, the Statistical Yearbook and the Statistical Pocketbook as well as the substantial improvement of the capability to respond to special requests;

(c) The constant review of the Statistical Office publications and the assessment of the quality and the reliability of the data therein with a view to improving their usefulness;

(d) Better co-ordination of the contents of the Statistical Office publications with those of the regional commissions and the specialized agencies.

(e) Expected impact

1929. More effective and efficient servicing of user needs through both the

8/ Ibid., Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5236).

9/ Ibid., Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5603).

regular publications and special tabulations will be achieved through the above actions. In particular statistical data will be made available more quickly, the data will be more comprehensive and reliable, special requests will be satisfied more efficiently, interchange and joint use of data will be improved and duplication avoided. Fuller use will be made of available statistical material.

SUBPROGRAMME 6: CO-ORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

(a) Objective

1930. The objective is to promote co-ordination of the international statistical system and to provide statistical services to other units within the Secretariat and to other United Nations bodies. The Statistical Office serves as a focal point for the international statistical system.

(b) Problem addressed

1931. Because of the decentralized nature of the international statistical system and the limited amount of resources available for statistical activities, special efforts must be made to promote a co-ordinated and integrated statistical programme for the United Nations system. There is still also a need to extend and broaden co-ordination and integration of programmes to include intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which carry out important activities in statistics. Despite the substantial efforts made in the past there is still inadequate comparability in concepts, definitions and classifications. For example: the links of the System of National Accounts with the System of Material Balances of the National Economy and the methods for international comparison between national product, expenditure and other statistics are insufficiently developed. Greater efforts are needed to improve co-ordination of technical advice and assistance to developing countries.

(c) Legislative authority

1932. The principal authority for these activities is to be found in Economic and Social Council resolutions 8 (I) as amended by 8 (II), 1306 (XLIV) and 1566 (L) which, inter alia, call for the Statistical Commission and the Statistical Office: to assist the Council in the co-ordination of the statistical work of specialized agencies; to take steps to promote arrangements to ensure the development of an integrated system in the collection, data processing and dissemination of international statistics by the organs and agencies of the United Nations systems.

(d) Strategy and output

1933. The strategy elements involved in reaching this objective include:

(a) Technical and substantive servicing of the Statistical Commission, the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination, and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities;

(b) Maintenance of close liaison with the statistical services of the regional commissions, specialized agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and national statistical services;

(c) Regular publication of an interagency International Statistical Reporter which will be undertaken in order to provide a source of information on important developments in international statistical activities;

(d) Maintenance, bringing up to date and expansion of the Directory of International Statistics;

(e) Preparation and improvement of reports of integrated five-year plans of (i) the regular and (ii) technical assistance activities of the international statistical system;

(f) Continuation of studies to enhance the comparability, consistency and usefulness of international statistics;

(g) Continued provision of statistical services to the General Assembly organs and other bodies on request, including the provision of data on national income, exchange rates, population etc. to the Committee on Contributions and the provision of substantive services and statistical expertise to various units of the Secretariat or other United Nations bodies.

(e) Expected impact

1934. Greater efficiency and co-ordination of international statistical activities and improved integration and consistency of statistical programmes and their outputs will result. This will also be conducive to improvements in the activities of national statistical offices.

SUBPROGRAMME 7: IMPROVEMENT OF STATISTICAL CAPABILITY OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(a) Objective

1935. The objective of this subprogramme is to assist developing countries, through advisory and technical co-operation activities:

(a) To further develop their statistical capability and the statistics they need for monitoring and directing their economic and social development;

(b) To apply effectively appropriate data processing technology for statistical and related purposes.

(b) Problem addressed

1936. In many developing countries, the capabilities of the statistical system are still limited and do not provide the adequate information needed by planners, policy-makers and administrators, both at the national and international levels. To illustrate, in Africa it is estimated that somewhat less than 10 per cent of the total population of the region reside in countries with a relatively complete birth registration system; in South America the comparable figure is 20 per cent. Moreover the statistics that become available are often tardy. Nearly 30 per cent of countries in Africa and Asia have not yet reported Gross Domestic Product estimates for 1971. Aside from weakness in the capability for collection of statistics, the lack of timeliness reflects inadequate data processing or printing facilities. Thus the usefulness of the statistics which are disseminated for policy and planning is much reduced.

(c) Legislative authority

1937. The principal authority for these activities is to be found in: (a) Economic and Social Council resolution 1566 (L), paragraph 6, which requested the Secretary-General to undertake concerted action to assist the developing countries in strengthening their statistical systems as the basis for their development plans and the evaluation of their economic and social progress, and paragraph 7; (b) Economic and Social Council resolution 1947 (LVIII); (c) African Census Programme (E/CN.14/496); (d) General Assembly resolution 3362 (S-VII); (e) Statistical Commission report of eighteenth session, 10/ paragraph 55.

(d) Strategy and output

1938. The strategy for supporting technical co-operation activities, which is carried out in co-operation with the Office of Technical Co-operation of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional commissions and interested specialized agencies, draws on the total expert know-how available in the Statistical Office covering all statistical subject-matter areas for which the United Nations has responsibility. Strategy elements are the following:

(a) Assisting developing countries to create and/or develop and organize their statistical services so as to provide the capability necessary to obtain data required by planners, administrators and other users;

(b) Transferring available statistical knowledge and techniques to statisticians in developing countries through training institutions sponsored by the United Nations, seminars, workshops and technical meetings, and in securing fellowships for counterpart staff to experts engaged on specific country projects;

(c) Based on methodological studies and classifications developed by the Statistical Office, preparing manuals adapted to meet local conditions and designed to assist countries in developing statistical subject-matter areas like national accounts, income distribution, energy, trade, industry, social and demographic statistics, vital registration systems, conduct of population censuses and sampling;

(d) Providing expert support as indicated under other medium-term objectives of this Office to assist developing countries develop continuing survey capabilities;

(e) Assisting developing countries to develop capabilities for effective utilization of electronic data processing technology, including the utilization of simple computer packaged techniques to process statistical data.

(e) Expected impact

1939. The strategy envisaged and corresponding outputs should have the following impact:

(a) Creation of stronger statistical services in developing countries and a core of efficient statisticians;

10/ Ibid., Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5603).

(b) Extension of the range of available statistics required for developmental and other purposes and their timely dissemination;

(c) The availability of a strong and experienced field survey capability for securing the required data in an organized and systematic manner;

(d) The availability of meaningful series of statistical indicators of various facets of the economy and society, such indicators being useful pointers to the economy's behaviour and social development;

(e) The Statistical Office of the United Nations will provide an increasingly reliable and varied amount of data on the economy and society of developing countries for use by countries and the international community. The provision of such data would lead to a greater awareness of the needs and circumstances of developing countries.

SUBPROGRAMME 8: INFORMATION SYSTEMS

1940. This subprogramme is being administered on an interdivisional basis within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs with the Statistical Office acting as the focal point. A description of the subprogramme will be found in the general medium-term strategy statement for the Department, at paragraphs 28 to 63 of part one of this document.
