

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.3/531  
16 June 1978

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATISTICAL COMMISSION

Twentieth session

20 February-2 March 1979

Item 12 of the provisional agenda. Programme objectives: implementation and prospects. (c) Statistical Office of the United Nations

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present document is a progress report, presented for the information of the Commission, on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations since the nineteenth session of the Commission, in November 1976. It covers the work of the Office of the Director (paras. 3-8), the External Relations and Dissemination Branch (paras. 9-30), the Systems and Standards Branch (paras. 31-43), the Economic Statistics and Special Projects Branch (paras. 44-68), the International Trade and Related Statistics Branch (paras. 69-98) and the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch (paras. 99-112).

INTRODUCTION

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1. At the nineteenth session, the Commission considered a progress report by the Secretary-General on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations (E/CN.3/498).<sup>1/</sup> The present document is the corresponding report on the work done since the nineteenth session. Another document, entitled "Programme objectives, medium-term plan, 1980-1983, and work programme of the Statistical Office of the United Nations" (E/CN.3/532), is also before the Commission. A progress report on the statistical work of the regional commissions and the Inter-American Statistical Institute (E/CN.3/529) and one on the statistical work of the specialized agencies (E/CN.3/530) are also before the Commission.

2. The following documents before the Commission at its twentieth session contain supplementary information on the work of the Statistical Office: E/CN.3/503 (proposals for the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics), E/CN.3/504 (international energy statistics), E/CN.3/505 (shipping statistics), E/CN.3/506 (international trade statistics), E/CN.3/507 (implementation of the revised System of National Accounts), E/CN.3/508 (draft guidelines on statistics of tangible assets), E/CN.3/509 (public sector statistics), E/CN.3/510 (draft classification of the functions of government), E/CN.3/511 (links between the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy), E/CN.3/512 (total consumption of the population), E/CN.3/513 (International Comparison Project), E/CN.3/514 (harmonization of economic classifications), E/CN.3/515 and Add.1-3 (draft recommendations for population and housing censuses), E/CN.3/516 (methods of collecting, organizing and retrieving social statistics to achieve integration), E/CN.3/517 (social indicators), E/CN.3/518 (harmonization of concepts and classifications among specialized fields of social statistics), E/CN.3/519 (statistics of time use), E/CN.3/520 (co-ordination of environment statistics), E/CN.3/521 (environment statistics), E/CN.3/522 (setting priorities in national statistics), E/CN.3/523 (international technical co-operation in statistics), E/CN.3/524 (evaluating technical co-operation projects), E/CN.3/525 (training of statistical personnel), E/CN.3/526 (technical co-operation in statistical data processing), E/CN.3/527 (national Household Survey Capability Programme), E/CN.3/528 (international statistical programmes) and E/CN.3/533 (proposed definitions of selected terms for use by the Commission),

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<sup>1/</sup> For a summary of the discussion in the Commission, see Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 2 (E/5910), paras. 198-202.

## I. OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

3. Two central units are attached to the Office of the Director, namely an internal co-ordination and planning unit and a computer systems development and programming unit.

A. Internal co-ordination and planning

4. This staff is responsible for several central functions such as the preparation of the publications programme, the preparation of the medium-term plan and budget documents and the co-ordination of personnel and over-all administrative matters.

5. A central liaison function with the regional commissions has been established to provide close collaboration on statistical programmes and activities, personnel matters and technical co-operation in statistics. Special consultations were held at United Nations Headquarters in March and April 1978 with the chief statisticians of three regional commissions and the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI) and similar consultations are planned for February 1979. The co-ordination of technical co-operation activities within the Statistical Office is also carried out. The staff provides liaison between (a) the substantive branches and the computer technical co-operation staff of the Statistical Office and (b) the administrative and operational divisions outside the Office. A computer list of experts suitable for various statistical subject-matter areas and statistical data processing is maintained and constantly evaluated and reviewed. Work on co-ordinating and monitoring the needs of developing countries for technical co-operation is done. For details on the present and prospective technical co-operation activities in all fields of statistics and on technical co-operation in statistical data processing, see E/CN.3/523 and E/CN.3/526, also before the Commission.

B. Computer systems development and programming

6. The staff provides service to the entire Statistical Office in computer-related matters. The main emphasis of current development is in upgrading techniques and improving file structures to provide timely production of both pre-planned and unanticipated tabulations.

7. Considerable improvements have been made in the introduction of pre-filled questionnaires in energy and national accounts statistics. Several publications are now being produced by photocomposition, with attendant improvements in quality at reduced cost, despite increased data content.

8. The first phase of a new integrated statistical information system went into production in June 1978. It provides on-line storage and maintenance of data and text as well as publication definitions. The next major thrust will be integration of the new system into existing application programmes and building up the content of the integrated data bank. Special attention has been given to ensuring maximum compatibility with other international and national statistical data processing systems to facilitate data and programme exchange.

## II. EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND DISSEMINATION BRANCH

### A. Co-ordination of the statistical programmes of the United Nations system

9. The Branch maintains and promotes a co-ordinated and integrated international statistical programme to assist national statistical systems in both developing and developed countries. Such an activity is essential in the field of statistics because of the decentralized nature of the international statistical system and the limited resources available. Efforts have continued to broaden the co-ordination and integration of statistical programmes through the extended and more systematic involvement of both the regional commissions and organizations outside the United Nations system, for example, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Statistical Office of the European Communities (SOEC) and the Inter-American Statistical Institute (IASI). These organizations are regularly invited to the meetings of the Statistical Commission and the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). They contribute to the joint planning documents on regular programmes (E/CN.3/528) and technical co-operation (E/CN.3/523), as well as to other reports before the Commission.

10. ACC in its report to the sixty-third session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) noted that (a) the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities was providing a forum in which the preparations and documentation for intergovernmental organs are discussed and arrangements for carrying out their decisions are worked out (E/5973, para. 30) and (b) closer working relationships with the intergovernmental organs were being developed in the statistical field.

11. As part of its co-ordinating function, the Branch has over-all responsibility for the documentation and servicing of the Statistical Commission, its Working Group and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. The Branch prepared nine of the 33 documents for the twentieth session of the Commission, all of the documents for the seventh session of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination and 25 of the 42 documents for the eleventh and twelfth sessions of the Sub-Committee.

12. The coverage of the reports on the integrated five-year plans of the regular and technical co-operation activities of the international system (E/CN.3/528 and E/CN.3/523) has been expanded by the inclusion of (a) the programmes of additional organizations in both reports, (b) a review of achievements in co-ordination in selected substantive areas in the report on the regular programme (E/CN.3/528), (c) information on bilateral technical assistance in statistics in the technical co-operation report (E/CN.3/523) and (d) an outline of the procedures for obtaining technical co-operation in statistics through the United Nations system.

13. In the period under review, close liaison was maintained with the statistical services of the specialized agencies, other intergovernmental and non-governmental

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statistical organizations and national statistical services. During the twelfth session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, which was held at United Nations Headquarters in February 1978, senior staff of the Statistical Office had wide-ranging discussions with the representatives of the specialized agencies and non-United Nations organizations concerning their respective programmes. Similar consultations are planned concurrently with the twentieth session of the Commission.

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14. Further actions were taken concerning the co-ordination of statistical questionnaires and the exchange of data among the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other international organizations with a view to reducing the reporting burden on countries. An integrated list of statistical questionnaires was updated and expanded and the extent of inter-change of data was recorded for review by the Working Group. Several countries were requested to review the statistical questionnaires sent to them by the international organizations, with a view to identifying elements of duplication. The results of these reviews are being studied with a view to preparing proposals for action. The central statistical offices of approximately 30 other countries were supplied with copies of blank questionnaires regularly sent to them by the Statistical Office of the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Health Organization with a request that they indicate ways in which the regular receipt of these questionnaires could assist in the control of duplication.

15. Virtually all stocks of the first edition of the Directory of International Statistics 2/ have been exhausted. Work is currently under way to produce a second edition of the Directory, updated to 1978 and expanded in coverage to increase its usefulness for co-ordination and other purposes.

16. Increased effort has been made to expand the dissemination of statistical publications. The Statistical Office has displayed statistical publications at several international meetings of statisticians and meetings of user groups. Addresses have been given to user group meetings and other interested groups to outline the work of the international statistical system and to publicize the outputs of the system. The Statistical Office is working closely with the Sales Section of the Department of Conference Services, whose responsibility it is to promote sales.

17. Since the dissemination of statistics in machine-readable form is becoming increasingly common, the policies relating to dissemination and especially secondary dissemination are being reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate under current circumstances.

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

## B. Statistical organization

18. Work continued on the new edition of the 1954 Handbook of Statistical Organization. <sup>3/</sup> A first draft of the new edition has been completed by a consultant and is under review in the Statistical Office. As requested by the Commission at its nineteenth session, "The organization of national statistical services; a review of major issues" (E/CN.3/495) was published <sup>4/</sup> and widely distributed to statistical offices and other national authorities.

19. The Statistical Office co-operated with the Munich Centre for Advanced Training in Applied Statistics for Developing Countries in the preparations for a seminar on statistical organization held in August 1977. Four papers were prepared and presented by the Statistical Office. A consultant was engaged to prepare "The setting of priorities in national statistics; a review of major issues" (E/CN.3/522), also before the Commission.

## C. Collection and dissemination of data in general statistical compendiums

### 1. Statistical Yearbook

20. Efforts have continued to improve the contents of the Statistical Yearbook, to present more balanced information on various subjects and to show more analytical data. In the 1977 issue new tables on foreign trade were added. Included in the new tables is information on balance of trade, per capita exports and imports and exports of primary commodities and of manufactured goods as a percentage of total exports. Information is also given on the structure of exports of developing countries by commodities and by trading partners. More efficient printing methods are being introduced. In the 1977 issue, approximately 50 pages of tables were produced directly from computer tapes using photo-composition.

### 2. Monthly Bulletin of Statistics

21. The Monthly Bulletin of Statistics is in its thirty-second year of publication. It shows data for seven years and 18 current months in 73 tables for about 200 countries. Various aggregates of geographical regions and economic groupings of the world are shown in 28 additional non-monthly tables. Improvements made to this publication over the past two years have included the publication of special tables on foreign conversion factors, trade within and between the developed and developing areas and the schedule of daily subsistence allowance rates of United Nations officials. The table on world export price indexes of primary commodities and non-ferrous base metals was enlarged and included on a regular monthly basis. During the period, work commenced on the development of a computerized data base for the preparation of the Bulletin.

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<sup>3/</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. 54.XVII.7.

<sup>4/</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.5.

3. <sup>1977</sup> Supplement to the Statistical Yearbook and Monthly Bulletin of Statistics

22. Work is almost completed on the third issue of the Supplement to the Statistical Yearbook and Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, which contains updated descriptions of the definitions, methods, classifications etc. in use for national statistics included in the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.

4. Statistical Pocketbook: World Statistics in Brief

23. The first and second editions of the annual Statistical Pocketbook: World Statistics in Brief were published. <sup>5/</sup> Photocomposition was used in the second edition to improve the appearance of the publication and the clarity of the data. The third edition is in preparation.

D. Price statistics and related areas

1. Post-adjustment measurement

24. The Statistical Office continued to carry out a number of functions on behalf of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) until 3 April 1978 when direct administrative and technical supervision of the Cost-of-Living Section of the Statistical Office was transferred to ICSC. The work carried out on behalf of ICSC included cost-of-living surveys for post-adjustment classification purposes. Post-adjustment indexes are calculated for the purpose of preserving equivalent standards of living at various duty stations where international civil servants are assigned.

25. The Statistical Office also provided substantive statistical servicing for the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions, a subsidiary body of ICSC established to review the methods used in calculating post-adjustment indexes and to give guidance in carrying out cost-of-living surveys.

26. Place-to-place studies were carried out in approximately 27 duty stations; these studies involve collecting price and family expenditure data, establishing consumption patterns for weighting purposes and computing post-adjustment indexes. Where no suitable local consumer price indexes were available (for about 80 cities), time-to-time comparisons were made in order to bring up to date the place-to-place results based on current price data.

27. An expenditure and price survey was conducted in New York, the base of the system, in order to update the weighting pattern for this city and to collect price data to be used in all future cost-of-living studies. In addition, comprehensive reviews were carried out for approximately 140 duty stations in April, August and December of each year, based on the results of recent surveys,

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<sup>5/</sup> United Nations publications, Sales Nos. E.76.XVII.6 and E.77.XVII.15.

official consumer price indexes and other estimates. The Cost-of-Living Section also prepared for the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics a special table on "Retail price indexes relating to living expenditures of United Nations officials" in about 124 duty stations.

## 2. International price statistics programme

28. Work started on the development of an international price statistics programme in co-operation with the specialized agencies and other interested international organizations. The primary aim of the programme is to meet the general analytical requirements of the international community for information of this kind. A detailed review and appraisal of current interagency work on prices was carried out in this connexion and a set of general proposals for an international programme was presented to the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities at its twelfth session. Further work is proceeding in the light of the conclusions of the Sub-Committee.

## 3. International Comparison Project

29. Work on Phase II of the International Comparison Project (ICP) was concluded in 1977. A report on this phase, presenting binary and multilateral comparisons for 1970 and 1973 for 16 countries (including the 10 countries covered in Phase I) was published in June 1978. <sup>6/</sup> The third phase of the project, which is expected to produce full-scale comparisons for about 30 countries for 1975, is scheduled for completion by June 1979.

30. Following the decision of the World Bank to relinquish its role as principal sponsor of the project, a fund-raising drive was initiated by the Statistical Office for the purpose of mobilizing external resources for future work. A five-year plan has been drawn up with a view to transforming the project within this period into a regular collection, compilation and dissemination activity of the international statistical programme. For further details, see E/CN.3/513, also before the Commission.

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<sup>6/</sup> International Comparisons of Real Product and Purchasing Power. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, ~~June~~ 1978.



## III. SYSTEMS AND STANDARDS BRANCH

A. Systems of national accounts and balances1. Review of the System of National Accounts

31. A review of countries' experiences in implementing the revised System of National Accounts (SNA) has been a major preoccupation of the Branch during the period under review. The conclusions of the review are before the Commission (E/CN.3/507). An earlier draft, discussed by a working party of the Conference of European Statisticians in February 1978, pointed to the need for establishing a mechanism for a continuing review and updating of SNA and proposed areas where work was most urgent.

32. Work has continued on assisting countries to implement SNA. In technical co-operation, the recent filling of the post of technical adviser is expected to strengthen the backstopping activity performed by the Branch, as well as to improve communications with countries generally. During the period under review, a training seminar was held at Beirut and a staff member visited several countries in connexion with technical co-operation in national accounts. *Beirut*  
*Van Tongeren*

33. Work has continued on the preparation of handbooks and manuals and on the completion of the full SNA as originally projected. During the review period, two publications in this programme were issued, namely Provisional International Guidelines on the National and Sectoral Balance-Sheet and Reconciliation Accounts of the System of National Accounts 7/ and Provisional Guidelines on Statistics of the Distribution of Income, Consumption and Accumulation of Households. 8/ In addition, several other publications in this programme are in preparation. "Draft international guidelines on statistics of tangible assets" (E/CN.3/508) is before the Commission. An earlier draft of the guidelines was circulated to countries for comment and these comments are reflected in the present draft. A paper reporting on a comparative study of national practices relating to statistics on the structure and the financial operations of enterprises is being circulated to countries for comment. The draft manual on methods of compiling national accounts in current prices (ST/ESA/STAT.77) has been extensively revised. Part I deals with the production accounts and part II with the income and outlay and capital finance accounts. A draft manual on methods of compiling national accounts in constant prices and one on flow-of-funds statistics are in preparation.

2. Links between SNA and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

34. Two documents dealing with this topic are before the Commission, namely, "Progress report on links between the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the

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7/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.10.

8/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.11.

System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)" (E/CN.3/511) and "Total consumption of the population: technical report" (E/CN.3/512). During the period under review, a technical report comparing the aggregates of the two systems in conceptual terms was issued, namely Comparisons of the System of National Accounts and the System of Balances of the National Economy: Part One, Conceptual Relationships. 9/ Part two of this publication, containing statistical examples for nine countries, has been sent to the countries concerned for their approval. Work in this area is now focused on the developments of common concepts that will be useful in both systems. The document on total consumption of the population (E/CN.3/512) discusses one such concept. A paper on a common concept of capital formation is in preparation.

### 3. Public sector statistics

35. Two documents on this topic are before the Commission, namely "Progress report on the manual on public sector statistics" (E/CN.3/509) and "Draft detailing of the classification of the functions of government" (E/CN.3/510). A preliminary phase of the work, involving the construction of a very detailed reconciliation between the concepts used in the public sector statistics manual of the United Nations and the government finance statistics manual of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), has been completed. Since the two sets of data are designed to serve different purposes, it is almost inevitable that there should be some differences between them; the IMF data, for instance, do not include financial institutions which, for SNA purposes, cannot be omitted. A joint proposal by the Statistical Office and the IMF Bureau of Statistics for the revision of both the SNA public sector manual and the IMF government finance statistics manual was considered by a working party of the Conference of European Statisticians in July 1976 and at the nineteenth session of the Statistical Commission. Implementation of the proposals is under way.

36. The detailed functional classification of the expenditures of general government was revised in the light of the comments received on the earlier draft, which had been considered by the Commission in 1976. A major concern in the revision has been the clarification of questions having to do with the objective of the classification and the entities it was designed to classify. An effort has been made, also, to ensure that the detail shown in the different parts of the classification is balanced.

### 4. Welfare-oriented measures to supplement the national accounts and balances

37. At its nineteenth session the Commission approved the publication of a document on welfare-oriented measures designed to improve the usefulness of the national accounts for analysis of social welfare questions. The document was revised and has been published as The Feasibility of Welfare-Oriented Measures

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9/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.6.

to Supplement the National Accounts and Balances: a Technical Report. 10/ Work on this topic is continuing as a part of the review of SMA (see paras. 31-33 above).

B. Framework for the integration of social and demographic statistics

1. Methods of integration of social and demographic statistics

38. At its nineteenth session the Commission requested that a study be undertaken of methods of achieving integration in the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of social and demographic statistics. A document on this topic is before the Commission, namely, "Methods of collecting, organizing and retrieving social statistics to achieve integration" (E/CN.3/516). The draft had been discussed by an expert group in March 1978 and was revised in the light of the discussion. The document contains a proposed programme for further work.

2. Harmonization of concepts and classifications among specialized fields of social statistics

39. At its nineteenth session the Commission agreed that harmonization of concepts and classifications among specialized fields of social and demographic statistics should have high priority as a principal tool for achieving integration among the different social fields. A progress report on this work (E/CN.3/518) is before the Commission. Work in this area, which started with the classification of age, has been interrupted as a result of delays in recruitment.

C. Price statistics

40. At its nineteenth session the Commission approved the publication of guidelines on price and quantity statistics and endorsed a programme of further work involving the preparation of manuals on sources and methods of compiling price and quantity statistics in a number of specific areas. The publication has been revised and issued. 11/ In addition to the draft manual on national accounts in constant prices mentioned in paragraph 33 above, a draft manual on producers' prices has been prepared and one on prices in external trade is in preparation. It is planned to complete the series with a manual on consumers' prices, to be undertaken jointly with ILO.

D. Standard classifications

1. Harmonization of statistical classifications

41. At its nineteenth session the Commission approved a long-term programme of work on the harmonization of economic classifications, aimed at the eventual

10/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.12.

11/ Guidelines on Principles of a System of Price and Quantity Statistics (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.9).

construction of a combined trade/production commodity classification. During the period under review, work has proceeded on this programme. A joint United Nations/Statistical Office of the European Communities Working Group on World-level Classifications has been established. A meeting was held in November 1977 and a second meeting is scheduled to be held late in 1978 or early in 1979. In accordance with the work programme, the Working Group devoted attention to possible revisions in the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) to take account of changes in the structure and organization of industry since the 1968 revision of ISIC, to facilitate harmonization between commodity classifications and ISIC and to bring about closer co-ordination between classifications of the same type produced by different organizations.

42. As requested by the Statistical Commission, the Statistical Office has also been taking a more active role in the deliberations of the Harmonized System Committee of the Customs Co-operation Council, participating in three meetings a year. The International Classification of All Goods and Services (ICGS) is being prepared for issuance as a technical working document. Work has also been proceeding on the development of a classification of common groupings of ICGS and the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC). Such common groupings are designed to facilitate the compilation of data on commodities by forming groupings in the two classifications that are approximately equivalent. A progress report on these topics (E/CN.3/514) is before the Commission.

## 2. Register of countries and areas

43. As a part of the development of an integrated system for computer storage and processing of Statistical Office data, a central register of countries and areas has been established and procedures are being initiated for its regular updating. A publication describing the methods of maintaining and updating the register is under consideration. The Office is also participating in the work of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) on constructing a country code system that incorporates the United Nation numerical codes and thus aids in the harmonization of statistical processing.

## IV. ECONOMIC STATISTICS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS BRANCH

A. Collection and dissemination of national accounts data

44. National accounts data have been collected from 155 countries through questionnaires and other sources. The traditional national accounts questionnaire has been redesigned and replaced by a computer generated joint United Nations/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development prefilled questionnaire. The new questionnaire contains the items for which estimates have been previously submitted by the countries. This has resulted in a reduction of the response burden on countries, more consistent and complete figures and a saving of resources. The national accounts estimates are processed on the computer at the United Nations and stored on magnetic tape. This tape has increasingly become the main source of basic national accounts data and a number of units of the United Nations Secretariat (for example, the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies and the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport), some specialized agencies and other international organizations have drawn heavily on the data contained on the tape.

45. The Statistical Office continued its publication programme in the field of national accounts statistics. The 1976 edition of the Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics, now shows in volume I ("Individual Country Data") detailed national accounts estimates for 132 countries and in volume II ("International Tables") data for 155 countries. Volume I and a part of volume II of the 1976 Yearbook were produced by photocomposition for the first time. The use of photocomposition techniques have reduced considerably the time, effort and cost in producing the Yearbook, which now has been compressed from three into two volumes; data included have increased by 20 per cent over the 1975 edition whereas the number of pages was reduced by 25 per cent.

46. The increasing coverage of the Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics was also reflected in the other Statistical Office publications that carry national accounts tables, namely, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, the Statistical Yearbook, the Compendium of Housing Statistics, the Compendium of Social Statistics, as well as in the ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics.

47. The Office continued to publish the public finance chapter in the Statistical Yearbook. A total of 91 countries were covered.

70 48. The manuscript of a new benchmark publication National Accounting Practices in Eighty Countries is expected to be submitted for publication early in 1979. The purpose of the publication is to present a comprehensive and fairly detailed description on sources and methods used for the construction of national accounts estimates. The information included was based on <sup>78</sup>80 country drafts prepared in the Statistical Office and submitted to the countries for comment and amendment. The publication will serve as a supplement to the Yearbook of National Accounts Statistics. Starting with the 1978 edition, a brief description on sources and methods will also be incorporated in the Yearbook itself in each country chapter.

B. Methodology of sample surveys

49. The thirteenth issue of <sup>c/14</sup> Sample Surveys of Current Interest, describing sample surveys in more than 50 countries, is expected to be published in 1978. 793

C. Servicing the Committee on Contributions and other United Nations bodies

50. The Statistical Office continued to provide substantive statistical servicing for the General Assembly and its Committee on Contributions, the Offices of the Secretary-General, the Office of Financial Services, the Office of Personnel Services, the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, the Department of Administration and Management, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and the specialized agencies.

51. For the work on the Committee on Contributions, the Statistical Office in 1977 and 1978 provided for each Member State national accounts data and estimates, population estimates, exchange rates, prices and data on the amortization of external public debt. The Statistical Office also prepared tables concerning the geographical distribution of staff at the professional and higher categories for the Office of Personnel Services.

D. Data on the distribution of income, consumption and accumulation

52. Work has continued on the compilation of data on the distribution of income. Some 100 publications have been reviewed and data extracted. The immediate objective is to complete an annotated inventory of statistics on income distribution for all countries for which such data are available. There are, however, serious deficiencies and gaps in this field of statistics and work of a fundamental nature will need to be undertaken.

E. Collection and dissemination of industrial, construction and distributive-trade statistics

53. The collection and compilation of data on industrial production, construction and distributive trades for publication in the Yearbook of Industrial Statistics, the Yearbook of Construction Statistics, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook are done on a continuing basis.

1. General industrial statistics

54. During 1977, the 1975 edition of volume I of the Yearbook of Industrial Statistics was published. <sup>12/</sup> It contained annual data through 1974 on major

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<sup>12/</sup> Yearbook of Industrial Statistics, 1975 Edition, vol. I. General Industrial Statistics (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.7).

indicators of industrial activity for 103 countries and indexes of industrial production and employment for the world and regions. The 1976 edition will be issued in 1978 covering general data through 1975 on the industrial activity of 105 countries.

55. Since the completion in 1974 of the computerized processing of the general industrial statistics data, volume I has been photo-offset from computer printouts. Photo-composition is being used for the first time for the 1976 edition. As part of the computerization process, a data bank covering data for 1953 and for the years beginning with 1958 has been established for most of the countries included in the Yearbook of Industrial Statistics. Data are available on two tapes, one covering the years through 1966 and the second, the years from 1967 onwards.

## 2. Commodity production statistics

56. During 1977, the 1975 edition of volume II of the Yearbook of Industrial Statistics was published. <sup>13/</sup> It contained annual commodity detail from 1966 through 1975 on 527 industrial commodities for 198 countries. The 1976 edition will be issued in 1978, covering approximately the same number of commodities and countries. This information at the commodity level supplements the information presented on an industry basis in volume I and provides a more specific indication of the nature and importance of the industrial activities undertaken in each country.

57. The preparation of pre-filled questionnaires, the processing of data and preparation of tables are computerized. Annual commodity series starting in 1958 are stored in a data bank on two tapes, one covering data through 1966 and the second, data from 1967 onwards.

## 3. Indexes of production and employment

58. Monthly, quarterly and annual indexes of industrial production and annual indexes of industrial employment and labour productivity for the world, regions, country groupings and selected countries are compiled on a continuing basis. Value added and employment estimates for 1970, covering 150 countries, are utilized as weights for the indexes. Corresponding estimates for 1975 will be established during 1978-1979 and the indexes will be re-based to 1975 in the November 1979 issue of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics.

59. Basic data for the compilation of production indexes are collected from 118 countries through computerized pre-filled questionnaires, of which data for 73 countries are reported in index form and the rest in the form of quantum indicators. In addition, production figures for four countries are also used to supplement the data from questionnaires.

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<sup>13/</sup> Yearbook of Industrial Statistics, 1975 Edition, vol. II, Commodity Production Data, 1966-1975 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.8).

60. Calculation of production indexes in their final form is computerized. However, manual calculation is required, particularly for estimates from incomplete and outdated national data.

61. The publication of indexes of industrial production and employment in volume I of the Yearbook of Industrial Statistics, the Statistical Yearbook and the February, May, August and November issues of the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics continued during 1977-1978.

#### 4. Construction statistics

62. The fourth issue of the Yearbook of Construction Statistics was published in 1977. <sup>14/</sup> It contained annual data from 1966 to 1975 on major indicators of construction activity for 117 countries. The fifth issue, containing 1967-1976 data, will be issued in 1978.

63. The information presented in the Yearbook is prepared from replies received from countries in response to the Questionnaire on Construction Statistics and supplemented by data from national publications.

64. It is expected that the eventual computerization of the processing and storage of the data will contribute to a better assessment of the quality and comparability of the data and enable the flexible retrieval of information for outside users.

#### 5. Distributive-trade statistics

65. The compilation and publication of distributive-trade and service statistics continued on a limited basis during 1977-1978. A few items of data were compiled for a number of countries on the wholesale, retail and service trades. No plans for major expansions are contemplated.

#### F. Development of methods and guidelines for the organization and improvement of statistics

66. A manual on the organization and conduct of surveys of distributive trades and services was issued in 1977. <sup>15/</sup> The manual is based on a draft prepared in 1975 by a consultant and covers the practical aspects of undertaking inquiries in this field from the planning phase to the publication of the final tables and the evaluation of the results.

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<sup>14/</sup> Yearbook of Construction Statistics, 1966-1975 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.13).

<sup>15/</sup> Organization and Conduct of Distributive-Trade Surveys (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.3).



67. "Initial proposals for the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics" (E/CN.3/503) are before the Commission.

68. The processing of the results of the 1973 World Programme of Industrial Statistics began in 1977. It is expected to be completed in 1978 and publication of the material is scheduled ~~later in the year~~.

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V. INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND RELATED STATISTICS BRANCH

A. Collection and dissemination of external trade statistics

69. The collection and compilation of international trade data for publication in Commodity Trade Statistics, the Yearbook of International Trade Statistics, the World Trade Annual and Supplement, the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook are done on a continuing basis.

1. Commodity Trade Statistics

70. The unit of the United Nations Statistical Office based in Geneva continued to improve its efficiency in the processing of the Commodity Trade Statistics (Statistical Papers, Series D). During the year 1977, the number of country/years processed was 155 as compared with 130 for 1975 and 87 for 1973. This increase in productivity provided the possibility:

(a) Of increasing the emphasis on the collection of data from developing countries: for instance, 131 country/years relating to the developing countries were entered into the data bank in 1977 as compared with 102 in 1975 and a yearly average of 75 during the period 1970-1974 and 43 during the period 1963-1970;

(b) Of improving the timeliness of the series. For instance, as of 1 March 1978, data for the year 1976 (a gap of one year and two months) were completed for 51 countries. Under similar time-lapse conditions, as of 1 March 1974, 39 had been completed for 1972 and as of 1 March 1973, 31 for the year 1971 had been completed.

71. In sharp contrast to these improvements, the publication of Series D continued to suffer longer and longer delays resulting from priority commitments in the Printing Service. The gains in compactness resulting from the photo-composition introduced in 1975 (thus facilitating the speeding up of the issuance of the publication, since fewer fascicles were necessary to provide the same amount of information) have been completely offset by the increasing volume of documents for the special sessions of the General Assembly, which had a higher priority in the programme of work of the Printing Service than did the Statistical Office.

72. In order to achieve a timelier release of Series D and to introduce economies, it has been decided to issue, for 1975 data onward both the quarterly and the annual series on microfiches and only the annual statistics in regular published form. The gain in timeliness by using the microfiche system is now about eight months over the present publication system. The microfiches provide information at the five-digit level of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) instead of at the four-digit level at present. The cut-off value of the data to be published is \$1,000 instead of \$100,000 as previously. The amount of information provided to the reader is nine times greater than in the regular Series D publication.

73. Compilation by manual extraction from national publications of all information not available on magnetic tapes has continued in order to fill the gaps in Series D.

74. The Branch has also undertaken the recompilation of all the necessary data for long-term series, going back to 1962. A computer programme has been written in order to obtain consistent estimates at the 3-digit level of SITC for all missing data.

## 2. Yearbook of International Trade Statistics

75. The Yearbook of International Trade Statistics has benefited from the progress of Series D. It has been possible to improve further the timeliness of the publications issued in 1977 and 1978.

76. The content of the Yearbook has also been greatly increased. The Yearbook issued in 1971 contained 290,000 entries; in 1974, 580,000 entries; in 1975, 915,000 entries; in 1976, 1,042,000 and in 1977, 1,217,000 entries.

77. The 1976 Yearbook, issued late in 1977, and the 1977 Yearbook, scheduled to be issued in November 1978, are larger than that of 1975 and the data contained therein provide more elaborate information; for instance, besides the value of trade, the share in percentage of the partner countries, the distribution of imports according to broad economic categories (BEC) and the distribution of exports according to industrial origin are now given. New tables analysing the export structure of the developing countries by commodities or by partner and external trade indicators will be published in the 1977 Yearbook of International Trade Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook.

## 3. Price indexes of world trade

78. In order to take into account changes in price structure, price indexes for the exports of primary commodities have been rebased on 1975 and are now published on a monthly basis.

79. Computation of export price indexes of manufactures at the 3-digit level of SITC undertaken at the request of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is currently carried out. Indexes are available from 1970 to 1977 on a yearly basis and from 1976 on a quarterly basis. On an experimental basis, these indexes have been regrouped to cover some important industries such as iron and steel, textiles, machinery, transport equipment, chemicals etc. The weighting pattern of these indexes is based on trade in 1974 but will be changed to 1975 in order to correspond to the indexes of exports of primary commodities.

80. Preliminary work has been carried out in order to obtain average value indexes of exports of manufactures of developing countries. Indexes on world trade with base 1970 = 100 are being regularly compiled and published.

B. Standard International Trade Classification

81. A growing number of countries are reporting their trade statistics according to the SITC, Rev.2, but for reasons of intercountry and interregional ~~comparisons~~ comparisons, data are converted into SITC, Rev.1. for publication in the Yearbook of International Trade Statistics. They are however published according to the SITC, Rev.2, in the Commodity Trade Statistics (Series D).

82. Work is well under way on an alphabetic index to SITC, Rev.2, a joint effort of the Statistical Office and the Customs Co-operation Council. Completion of the work and its computerization are expected shortly.

C. Expert Group on International Trade Statistics

83. An Expert Group on International Trade Statistics met at the United Nations Headquarters in December 1977. The main recommendations of this Group appear in E/CN.3/506, also before the Commission. As a general conclusion, the experts agreed that international trade statistics deserved continuing attention at the international level and that the publication International Trade Statistics; Concepts and Definitions 16/ was in urgent need of revision.

D. External trade statistics by mode of transport

84. The Results of a Pilot Study in Maritime Transport for the years 1966-1968 17/ has been published. In this study, international trade statistics were used to arrive at transport statistics by sea. Updating and improving the study is now possible thanks to a grant from the Government of Norway.

85. Document E/CN.3/505, also before the Commission, describes present and future work of the Statistical Office in the field of transport statistics.

E. Special studies

86. The work undertaken at the request of the Security Council committee established in pursuance of resolution 253 (1968) concerning the question of Southern Rhodesia is being continued. A note containing a short analysis of Southern Rhodesian trade, together with statistical data, is provided annually to the committee.

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16/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.70.XVII.16.

17/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.XVII.9.

F. Energy statistics

87. The compilation, evaluation and dissemination of data on the energy fuels produced, traded and consumed in individual countries and on a regional and global basis continue to have high priority. The publication of the annual World Energy Supplies (Statistical Papers, Series J) and the development of national energy balances or accounts continue to receive concentrated attention.
88. A document entitled "Progress report on the development of international energy statistics" (E/CN.3/504), describing the current work in the preparation of energy balances and the further development of international energy statistics, is also before the Commission. An Expert Group on Classification and Measurement in the Field of Energy Statistics met at United Nations Headquarters in March 1978 and the results of the meeting are reflected in the progress report.
89. A document entitled "Energy statistics and energy balances: essentials for a unified energy policy framework in the ECA region" (E/CN.14/CAS.10/12) was prepared by the Statistical Office for the tenth session of the Conference of African Statisticians, in October 1977.
90. World Energy Supplies, 1971-1975 <sup>18/</sup> initiated a five-year coverage. New tables were presented on the production and trade of fuelwood and charcoal, derived from series reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, thus initiating coverage of the so-called "non-commercial" sources of energy. In addition, data for all gases were presented on a tera-calorie basis in order to reflect more accurately their heating value.
91. A new international questionnaire on energy statistics was circulated to countries in June 1977 as a vehicle for the collection of data preparatory to the compilation of national energy balances. Following the introduction of this computerized questionnaire, new end-use data for the years 1970-1976 were collected covering consumption by type of fuel in the transportation, industrial, household and energy sectors. As of April 1978 the record count for this file was 150,000.
92. Data for 87 countries covering total and household supply of electric energy for the years 1966, 1970 and 1974 were prepared for the Compendium of Social Statistics. In addition, the manuscript for World Energy Supplies, 1972-1976 was completed in April 1978.
93. The computerized energy data system for World Energy Supplies continues to be reviewed and updated annually and at present two separate consecutive data files contain information for the 20-year period 1950-1969 and the seven-year period 1970-1976, plus preliminary production data on primary fossil fuels for 1977. The record counts for these two files are 185,137 and 76,633 respectively. The latter file was increased by 20 per cent over the previous period.

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<sup>18/</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.XVII.4.

94. A total of 24 organizations, including regional commissions, specialized agencies, national agencies, research institutes, corporations and universities, purchased or received complimentary copies of Series J tapes from April 1976 to March 1978.

95. Special computer print-outs of World Energy Supplies (WES) were provided to the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport of the United Nations Secretariat for the preparation of an energy report for the United Nations Committee on Natural Resources. A copy of the latest WES tape was provided to the Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies for use in The Future of the World Economy. 19/

96. The collection and compilation of energy statistics on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis for publication in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics and the Statistical Yearbook have continued.

#### G. Environment statistics

97. Work continued on statistics of the environment in the light of the action taken by the Commission at its nineteenth session. The initiation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Statistical Office on environment statistics in 1977 represents a new phase in the development of statistics in this field. The first stages of work have focused on the recruitment of personnel and on a survey of country practices in the field of environment statistics, the latter having been circulated to countries not members of the Economic Commission for Europe, following a similar survey conducted in that region in 1976. A report on the results of the survey and on the development of a process dictionary for use in materials/energy analysis is before the Commission (E/CN.3/521). The process dictionary was prepared with the assistance of a consultant and will be tested on a pilot basis.

98. A meeting on the co-ordination of environment statistics was held on the occasion of the twelfth session of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities, in February 1978. A report on the co-ordination of environment statistics is before the Commission (E/CN.3/520). It includes a description of the current activities of UNEP, in particular in so far as the development of programmes of interest to the UNEP/Statistical Office project is concerned.

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19/ Wassily Leontief et al., The Future of the World Economy: a United Nations Study (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977).

## VI. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS BRANCH

A. Collection and dissemination of demographic and social statistics

99. The 1975 Demographic Yearbook, featuring mortality statistics as a special topic, and the 1976 Demographic Yearbook, featuring marriage and divorce statistics, were issued. Both issues placed increased emphasis on (a) the inclusion of derived statistics oriented to the needs of users and (b) the improvement of the technical notes for the tables. The 1977 issue of the Demographic Yearbook will feature, for the first time, international migration statistics as a special topic.

100. The Compendium of Social Statistics, 1977 was submitted for publication. The publication was prepared with the co-operation and assistance of a number of the specialized agencies and represents the most comprehensive selection of social statistics ever compiled at the international level. Because of its method of production, a computer tape will be available for users wishing to utilize the Compendium to establish an international social statistics data base.

101. The compilation of the Compendium of Housing Statistics, 1975-1977 has been started. The Commission will recall that, at its eighteenth session, it recommended that three issues of this publication be issued. The one now under preparation is the third and a decision on the future of the publication will be taken in the next two years.

102. Assistance was provided to several units of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs in preparing ad hoc specialized statistical reports and tables in various fields of social statistics.

B. Development of recommendations, technical reports and handbooks on the collection and compilation of data on demographic and social conditions

103. Since the nineteenth session of the Commission, primary attention has been given to preparing "Draft principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses" (E/CN.3/515 and Add.1-3), also before the Commission, and to revising a number of documents approved at the nineteenth session of the Commission for publication. Provisional Guidelines on Statistics of International Tourism (based on E/CN.3/486) and Social Indicators: Preliminary Guidelines and Illustrative Series (based on E/CN.3/488) have been submitted for publication.

104. The preparation of several other technical reports for publication is nearly completed. These include Statistics of Internal Migration (based on E/CN.3/484), Studies in the Integration of Social and Demographic Statistics (incorporating, inter alia, a revised version of E/CN.3/489) and Improving Social Statistics in Developing Countries: Conceptual Framework and Methods (based on E/CN.3/482 and E/CN.3/483). Although more time will be required to prepare Revised Recommendations on Statistics on International Migration (based on E/CN.3.483), it is anticipated that it can also be submitted for publication before the end of 1977.

105. The analysis of the completed vital statistics methods questionnaire is continuing. The questionnaire was sent to countries in late 1976 and early 1977, and responses have been received from over 100 countries. Results from this study will be used in the revision of the Handbook of Vital Statistics Methods. <sup>20/</sup> Preliminary results have already aided in the interpretation and evaluation of project proposals for technical co-operation in the improvement of national vital statistics systems.

106. Work is well under way on the analysis of the results obtained from the questionnaire on costs and staffing requirements for population censuses that was sent to a selected group of countries in 1977. This study, together with two other activities being carried out in connexion with the 1980 Population and Housing Census Programme, is described in paragraphs 16-27 of document E/CN.3/515, also before the Commission.

107. In the field of social indicators, national and international developments continue to be under review; a report on recent developments (E/CN.3/517) is also before the Commission.

108. In line with the views expressed by the Commission in previous sessions, work has begun on developing international guidelines for classifications by age groups (see para. 39 above) and on compiling and disseminating information on technical developments in the field of statistics of time use. For further details, see E/CN.3/518 and E/CN.3/519, also before the Commission.

#### C. Improvement of social statistics relating to children and youth

109. In an effort to assist developing countries in collecting and compiling integrated statistical information for planning, monitoring and evaluating services for children and youth, a project on social statistics with particular reference to children and youth was initiated in 1974 in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and with the support of the interested specialized agencies. Work on methodology and guidelines is proceeding with the objective of providing technical advice in the use of social statistics along the general lines discussed and recommended by the Commission at the nineteenth session. The technical guidelines will provide interested Governments with the necessary elements for supporting integrated national or local programmes in social statistics, bringing users and producers of statistics together, with particular reference to the provision and utilization of basic services for children and youth. At the same time, work is being carried out in selected countries with a view to assisting individual national programmes in this field. Support, with UNICEF financing, has been given to operations in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Peru, Philippines, Somalia and Thailand. Further support to operations in Benin, Colombia, Sudan, Upper Volta and Yemen are under discussion. The intention is to use these projects as models for national programmes in different parts of the world at different stages of development and with different administrative and statistical structures.

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<sup>20/</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. 55.XVII.1.



110. One of the aims of these statistical support projects is to bring the producers and users of statistics closer together and to enable the information collected to be used for planning and evaluation purposes. This can best be illustrated by the Kenya project. As a result of the support given to the integrated rural household survey programme, the statistical authorities have been able to carry out household surveys, successively on agricultural output and crop forecasts, urban food purchasing patterns, access to social services, literacy, nutrition, the physically handicapped, the role of women etc. This allowed the provision of timely and indicative information of living conditions of a nature not hitherto available and it was possible to forecast likely areas of local famine many months in advance so that the necessary supply arrangements could be made. As a result of such indicative findings, there is a growing dialogue between the producers and users of social statistics in Kenya and a greater willingness for different sectoral interests to share in a common programme, using common mechanisms such as household surveys for obtaining information. Kenyan officials have visited the Sudan to explore with the Sudanese and UNICEF officials the possibility of establishing a similar if less comprehensive capability in the Sudan. Since the first few projects are pilot projects to be used as guides for other interested countries, a short film was made of the household survey programme in Kenya.

#### D. Technical co-operation activities

111. Substantive backstopping continued for technical co-operation related to population and housing censuses, civil registration and vital statistics systems, population surveys and efforts of countries to develop integrated social statistics programmes. In addition, in co-operation with the regional commissions, substantial efforts were devoted to planning and securing resources for a series of regional census training workshops. These workshops, scheduled for 1978, 1979 and 1980, are aimed at providing training for national census managers and chief technical officers in the technical and administrative skills needed to plan and carry out improved population censuses.

112. Development and support activities related to the National Household Survey Capability Programme are described in "Progress report on the National Household Survey Capability Programme" (E/CN.3/527), also before the Commission.

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