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Progress report on shipping statistics

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in accordance with a recommendation made by the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session, in February-March 1979. The activities described are of two types. The first involves the updating of a pilot study for the years 1966-1968 (paras. 6-9). The second concerns the promotion of a uniform system for collecting economic statistics on shipping, with an emphasis on developing countries (paras. 10-17). The report concludes with the assertion that the updating of the study will be completed by early 1982 but that additional financial resources must be sought in order to promote the uniform system (paras. 18-29). Points for discussion by the Commission are given in paragraph 21.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. Following consideration of a document entitled "Shipping statistics, within the framework of transport statistics" (E/CN.3/505) at its twentieth session, held from 20 February to 2 March 1979, the Statistical Commission "called the attention of Member States to the potential in this connexion of the uniform system and invited interested countries to examine the possibility of adopting the framework of the system". The Commission also requested the Secretary-General "to keep the topic of shipping statistics in the long-term work programme of the United Nations Statistical Office and to submit a progress report to the Commission at its twenty-first session". 1/
2. A grant of \$680,000 from the Government of Norway for the period 1978-1981 was specifically earmarked for the initial stages of the shipping statistics project proposed by the Statistical Office. The two objectives in the initial stages are (a) to complete the updating of the pilot study published in October 1976 2/ in order to meet the current demand pattern of shipping services of the world and (b) to carry out the preparatory work for promoting the uniform system for collecting economic statistics on shipping, with an emphasis on developing regions. The first objective may be achieved at the international level without any significant national effort. The second objective, however, can only be achieved through the efforts of individual countries, with technical assistance from international organizations to the developing countries.
3. The updating of the pilot study to the period 1969-1975 will be completed by June 1980; to 1976-1978, by June 1981; and to 1979-1980, by March 1982. When the results become available, they should be compared with the movements of vessels recorded daily by Lloyd's of London Press for the purpose of studying the utilization of the world merchant fleet by type, by route and, if possible, by flag.
4. Concerning the promotion of the uniform system, the Statistical Office participated in the second Workshop on Economic Statistics of Shipping, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and held at Bangkok, from 16 to 28 April 1979. Exploratory trips have been made to Egypt and Kenya, where preliminary inquiries were carried out to determine the possibility of adopting the system. Letters have been received from a few developed countries showing interest in the uniform system, and visits were made to those countries for exploratory talks on the possible adoption of the system. In addition, certain international forums of private institutions were used to propagate the idea of the

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1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1979, Supplement No. 3 (E/1979/23), para. 29 (c) and (g) (i).

2/ Results of a Pilot Study in Maritime Transport for the Years 1966-1968 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.XVII.9).

uniform system. <sup>3/</sup> Preparation of a manual for the implementation of the uniform system will be completed by the end of 1980. Discussions with the regional commissions and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have been held on the preparation of effective programmes for the implementation of the uniform system in the developing regions.

5. The activities mentioned in paragraph 4 above are preparatory in nature. No meaningful progress in promoting the uniform system can be expected without greatly expanded activities in the next few years, for which new financial resources must be found.

#### I. UPDATING THE PILOT STUDY

6. The first task in updating the pilot study was to review the original computer programmes in order to determine their suitability for updating, as well as improving, the results of the 1966-1968 study. Most of the programmes, written in the early 1970s, had to be rewritten because certain technological changes had occurred in the computer sciences, there had been changes in personnel, documentation was poor and the programmes lacked flexibility. The new programmes are much more flexible and thus far more efficient.

7. Except for the data from the United States of America, the data inputs for the pilot study related to regular external trade statistics. Notwithstanding all the techniques used to adjust the data to represent the gross tonnage of cargo moved by sea, the reliability of certain sectors of the results of the pilot study was highly dubious, particularly those with regard to short sea trade in Europe. Many countries have been able to submit the data for 1969-1975 in terms of weight for goods exclusively carried by sea. They include Argentina, Australia (exports), Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, the Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Venezuela. However, some of them could not supply the data for all the years of the period in question, nor could all of them supply commodity analysis in sufficient detail for an accurate conversion to a classification for ocean purposes. Nevertheless, the inclusion of such data inputs, particularly in conjunction with the full details supplied by some European countries on the transit trade and with the coastal analyses made by Canada and France, represents a significant improvement in the quality of the results.

8. The basic approach in compiling the matrixes for the flow of goods is the establishment of a data base representing the export trade for each country of the world, analysed by commodity according to the classification for maritime transport and by country of destination. Imports of the reporting countries are used to reflect the exports of non-reporting countries. These data are then supplemented

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<sup>3/</sup> For example, the International Advisory Group on Maritime Transport Statistics held its annual meeting at Antwerp, on 11 and 12 June 1979. The members of the Group are mostly from developed countries and represent the interests of users of statistics.

by information obtained through various other methods to reflect exports destined for other non-reporting countries. Thus, it is obvious that the more reporting countries included in the study, the better the quality of the results. For the compilation of the matrixes for 1969-1975, 70 countries have been selected as reporting countries, as compared to 30 in the 1966-1968 pilot study. In processing the data, major efforts are needed in order to:

(a) Examine in detail and adjust and/or quantify, where necessary, the source data (whether regular trade statistics or specially supplied information);

(b) Estimate the trade other than by sea in order to derive the trade by sea if the regular trade statistics are being used in the study as the basic data inputs;

(c) Estimate the volume of trade of the different and widely separated coasts of a country to which goods are being sent and

(d) Calculate the sea distances over which goods are being dispatched.

Early in 1980, the processing and the compilation of the data base, as well as of the import trade for the 70 countries, were completed. The establishment of the data base for non-reporting countries, which amounts to the inversion of imports of the 70 reporting countries and the estimation of their intratrade, was completed in March 1980.

9. The systematic checking of the data base and its aggregation in order to produce tabulations of various sorts for possible representation of the results should take about two months. By June 1980, the analysis of the results and the tabulations chosen to represent the results will be ready for printing. At the same time, the data for 1976-1978 for some countries are being processed as a part of the continuing task of updating the study.

## II. PROMOTING THE UNIFORM SYSTEM

10. The implementation of the uniform system for the collection of economic statistics on shipping is a task that can be carried out only by national Governments. Thus, to promote the system, Governments must be persuaded that they will benefit greatly from its adoption. In this respect, the action taken by the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session in inviting countries to examine the possibilities of adopting the framework of the system and in encouraging promotional work on the uniform system among developing countries beyond the ESCAP region has been helpful. <sup>4/</sup> Belgium and the Netherlands have responded to the Commission's recommendations and commented on the system. They described the difficulties that budgetary limitations have imposed on the implementation of the system. They also indicated that before they could adopt the system, the

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<sup>4/</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1979, Supplement No. 3 (E/1979/23), para. 29 (c) and (e).

agreement of their customs administrations was necessary. However, they would consider the possibility of adopting the system and would, in particular, be very much interested in learning the attitude of other countries towards the adoption of the system.

12. Aside from these two countries, Canada is preparing to implement the framework of the system. New Zealand reported that it had made preparations during recent years to implement the framework of the system and gave a relatively detailed description of the implementation plan. The implementation would be phased, commencing with a ship's movement recording system for 1979 and culminating in the implementation of an import and export system based on the customs statistics data base in 1981-1983.

13. In spite of the Statistical Commission's recommendations on the uniform system, it remains a fact that, aside from a few developing countries in the ESCAP region, the developed countries mentioned in paragraphs 11 and 12 and the United States of America, few countries, whether developed or developing, are aware of the uniform system. Some countries may be aware of the existence of the system but not of its details and/or potential. Therefore, steps should be taken to promote the uniform system and to make known the benefits that can accrue to countries adopting it. With the very limited resources available at present, the Statistical Office has been able to carry out only the preparatory activities in connexion with such promotion.

14. No developing countries have responded to the recommendation by the Statistical Commission with respect to their examination of the possibility of adopting the uniform system. Quite a few countries have indicated an interest in the system but are not sure whether they can make a meaningful examination. Therefore, the Statistical Office adviser on shipping statistics visited Egypt and Kenya in February 1980 to ascertain (a) the degree of compatibility of the statistical environment to the adoption of the uniform system, (b) the benefits that may accrue to the country once the system is implemented and (c) the human and other resources needed for the implementation of the system. Following the adviser's visits to Egypt and Kenya, he discussed with the Economic Commission for Africa (March 1980) the problems of implementation and the possibility of devising a programme jointly with the Statistical Office for the promotion of the system in Africa. For details on the three visits, see annex I below. Similar investigation in Latin America is planned for November 1980.

15. Because the Statistical Office has been closely associated with the project on the development of the uniform system in the ESCAP region, with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme, it may be considered a co-sponsor of the ESCAP project. Since the Office is now actively promoting the system on a global basis and since the ESCAP project ought to be considered a forerunner or a component of the global project, the smooth running and successful implementation of the ESCAP project have an important bearing on the viability of the system in other regions.

16. The Statistical Office directed the second Workshop on Economic Statistics of Shipping, held at Bangkok from 16 to 28 April 1979 and attended by participants from 13 countries of the ESCAP region. The proceedings of the Workshop revealed

that the implementation of the uniform system in many ESCAP member countries was progressing well. For information on the Workshop, see annex II, below.

17. A manual dealing with technical problems that might arise during the implementation of the system and possible solutions to those problems would be an important tool in promoting the uniform system and ensuring its viability. Such a manual was to be written on the basis of the experience gained by countries which had already adopted or were in the process of adopting the uniform system. As may be noted from annex II, the Workshop on Economic Statistics of Shipping discussed the draft of a handbook on economic statistics of shipping, prepared by ESCAP. Since the purpose of this handbook and that of the manual which was to be prepared by the Statistical Office are the same, it has been proposed that the two projects should be combined and the preparation of the manual should be a joint effort of the Statistical Office and ESCAP, with contributions from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) since its activities in the development of seaports in developing countries have been important.

### III. CONCLUSION

18. It should be pointed out that the bulk of the Norwegian grant (see para. 2) was intended for updating the pilot study and only a small proportion was allocated to preparatory work for the promotion of the uniform system. The grant covers the four-year period 1978-1981, but work on the project did not begin until August 1978.

19. As far as the updating of the pilot study is concerned, data up to 1980 will be available by early 1982 - that is, before the end of the actual four-year period August 1978-August 1982. During 1981-1982, some of the human resources are expected to be diverted from the pilot study to an analytical study of the utilization of the world merchant fleet by type, by route and possibly by flag. Such a study will be possible once the updated results of the pilot study are available, since they can be linked to the movements of vessels recorded daily by Lloyd's of London Press. However, it should be pointed out that a study of this type, while useful and interesting, can only be a temporary measure before the uniform system becomes operational in a number of important maritime countries. This is so because in such analyses goods are not linked to individual ships but rather to a group of ships of different flags assumed to be carrying the type of goods in question.

20. In promoting the uniform system, with an emphasis on developing countries, the work carried out so far, has been preparatory. No effective promotion in the developing regions can be expected without an expansion of activities over the next few years. Therefore, if the recommendations made by the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session are to be followed, greatly increased financial support must be sought from those Governments in a position to contribute voluntarily. Outside the ESCAP region, most developing countries are not aware of the advantage of implementing the system - namely, a better knowledge of essential economic statistics on shipping. However, it appears difficult to launch an effective campaign for promoting the uniform system in developing

countries without a general awareness of the importance of the system on the part of the developed countries, some of which are likely to be the eventual donors in projects relating to shipping statistics.

#### IV. POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

21. In the light of the progress that has been made since its twentieth session, the Commission may wish:

(a) To express its appreciation to the Government of Norway for its continued contribution to the Statistical Office project on the development of shipping statistics (para. 2); and

(b) To request the Secretary-General:

- (i) To direct the attention of all Member States, particularly developing countries, to the potential of the uniform system as a tool for developing shipping statistics for their economic planning and development (paras. 10-11);
- (ii) To hold seminars and workshops for promoting the uniform system and to recruit technical advisers to help the developing countries in implementing the system (para. 2);
- (iii) To raise adequate extrabudgetary funds for the activities mentioned in (ii) above (paras. 5, 19-20);
- (iv) To encourage the Secretariat to analyse the data on the flow of goods from the updated pilot study as compared to the movements of fleets on various sea lanes (para. 19);
- (v) To submit a progress report to the Commission at its twenty-second session.



## Annex I

### SUMMARY OF VISITS BY THE UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL OFFICE ADVISER ON SHIPPING STATISTICS, FEBRUARY-MARCH 1980

#### Introduction

1. The uniform system of collecting economic statistics of shipping may be defined as a statistical system in which a shipment of commodities in terms of the headings in the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) or the Customs Co-operation Council Nomenclature (CCCN) a/ is linked to the ship carrying it, so that the economic significance of the commodities can be related to the information available about the ship. This definition, although concise, covers all aspects of the system. It not only reflects the basic principle regarding the inseparability of goods from the carrier in shipping statistics, but also suggests flexibility of adoption with regard to the amount of information available about the commodities, on the one hand, and the ship on the other, so long as the two are linked. Using this definition of the uniform system as the guiding principle, it will be relatively easy to evaluate whether a country's statistical environment is conducive to the adoption of the framework of the uniform system, that is, whether the traded commodities classified by SITC and CCCN can be linked to the ships which carry them. The inquiries made in Egypt and Kenya (see paras. 2-9 below) revealed that the statistical environment in both countries is most conducive to the adoption of the uniform system, since the documentation of their customs and port authorities provides excellent information not only for easy linkage of the commodities to their carriers but also for most of the data elements contained in the three basic and two supplementary data files suggested in a document discussed by the Statistical Commission at its twentieth session (E/CN.3/505, paras. 47-59).

#### Egypt

2. In the compilation of the regular external trade statistics of Egypt, there is a basic tabulation which contains, inter alia, and for each commodity heading of SITC, the name of the ship which carries the commodities in question, its nationality (flag), the date of unloading for imports and loading for exports and the port of loading and unloading in Egypt. Using the customs documentation as the original source, the Government tabulates the information by hand for easy recording on magnetic tape. Similarly, for shipping statistics of Egyptian ports, such information as a vessel's name, its nationality (flag), date of arrival/departure, Egyptian port of reference, type of vessel (cargo, passenger, combo or tanker), type of commodities loaded or unloaded (crude petroleum, petroleum products or others), name of the shipping company to which the vessel

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a/ SITC and CCCN are mutually convertible classifications, as there is a one-to-one correspondence at the basic item level of each.

belongs, its agent in Egypt and so on is tabulated by hand. Thus it is obvious that through the names of ships and their approximate dates of arrival or departure, the two sets of data (one for external trade statistics and the other for shipping statistics) may be linked, since the essential elements for such a linkage are already available in the existing computer files.

3. The contents of the uniform system may be greatly increased in Egypt if moderate resources are invested. For instance, it is understood that the information about service type of individual ships visiting Egyptian ports (whether liner or non-liner, conference or non-conference), about the amount of cargo on board at the time of arrival and the amount unloaded and/or loaded is available from the port authorities. It is also understood that information on commodities, available in ship's manifests, such as port of loading or discharge, packaging and quantities in cubic measurement, can be introduced into the system. Furthermore, a register of ships containing information about their permanent features - type of vessel, its deadweight tonnage and cubic capacity (grain/bale) length, draught, etc. - can be compiled for ships visiting Egyptian ports. Such information is normally available in Lloyds Register of Shipping and often from individual port authorities. If this type of information can be assembled and recorded in computer files, the uniform system can be used to produce numerous sets of meaningful shipping statistics.

4. At the conclusion of his visit, the adviser on shipping statistics was informed by the statistical authorities of Egypt that (a) Egypt was well aware of the potential of the uniform system; (b) the statistical environment in Egypt was excellent for the implementation of the system; and (c) Egypt had decided to implement the system and was confident of success. However, further examination of the methods and careful planning of the execution were required. It was anticipated that several years would be needed to complete the implementation, which would have to be carried out in stages. The statistical services of Egypt were quite capable of carrying out the implementation.

#### Kenya

5. What is required in the commodity file of the uniform system (see E/CN.3/505, para. 47) is basic information such as a ship's name and date of arrival or departure, port of loading for imports, port of discharge for exports, gross weight and value of the commodity, freight charges and description of packaging. The import declaration and the accompanying invoice filed with customs by the importers in Kenya, together with the information available in the "Mombasa Port Release Order", would completely satisfy the requirements of the uniform system with respect to the commodities being exported.

6. What is required in the ship's movement file of the uniform system (see E/CN.3/505, para. 47) is basic information such as a ship's name and date of arrival or departure, cargo on board on arrival, cargo discharged and/or loaded, service type (conference or non-conference liner or tramp), previous port of call

and next port of call. The documents of the Mombasa port authority give most of that information; whatever is missing can be secured without much difficulty.

7. The comprehensiveness in Kenya of the basic data elements that are necessary to enable the uniform system to produce fruitful analytic economic statistics is quite remarkable. It was particularly impressive that one could find the freight charges for individual export commodities on ships' manifests for exports.

8. Generally, the most difficult technical problem in the uniform system is the linking of the commodity information available in customs with information on ships' movements available from the port authorities. The name of the ship and the date of arrival or departure, common to both the commodity file and the ship's movement file, provide the linkage in most cases. But in Kenya, the linking is automatically done when the "Mombasa Port Release Order" is processed for imports and the "Standard Shipping Order" is processed for exports. It is done through the use of a rotation or voyage number assigned to each ship which makes a journey to Mombasa at a particular time. Since this system of journey identification is already in use, the implementation of the uniform system in Kenya would merely require administrative co-ordination among the related government agencies.

9. In the light of the exceptionally encouraging statistical situation in Kenya, the adviser on shipping statistics recommended immediate implementation of the uniform system. While it appears rather simple in principle to implement the system in Kenya, it should be realized that a reasonable amount of resources is needed in order to ensure smooth and orderly implementation. Such resources would include adequate computer capability; personnel for designing the statistical formats for assembling the data elements as well as for making data inputs into the computer and for compiling a register of ships that visit Kenyan ports; programming personnel to write computer programmes for the analytical data that the Government wishes to produce and so on. In any case, the resources needed will be small compared with the benefits that can be derived from the resulting economic statistics of shipping, which can serve as a powerful tool to both the Government and industry for decision-making in shipping matters.

#### Economic Commission for Africa

10. The purpose of the visit to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) by the adviser on shipping statistics was to brief the secretariat of ECA on his findings in Egypt and Kenya with regard to the prospect of their adopting the uniform system of collecting economic statistics of shipping. The secretariat of ECA expressed the view that:

(a) The uniform system, as presented in document E/CN.3/505, contained many data elements which could be considered basic for maritime transport;

(b) Taking into consideration the particular requirements of the African region, one should add certain data elements to provide information relevant to decision-making on investments in shipping as well as on the improvement of port efficiency.

11. The following joint action to promote implementation of a comprehensive system of shipping statistics was agreed:

(a) ECA will initiate a project on shipping statistics;

(b) The ECA Transport, Communications and Tourism Division, in co-operation with the Statistics Division, will prepare a project document on shipping statistics for the African region and submit it to the United Nations Development Programme for financing; a copy of the document will be sent to the United Nations Statistical Office for comments;

(c) The project document will be prepared by the end of May 1980 with a view to starting project activities in 1981, or as soon as UNDP approves financing of the project;

(d) Project activities will include a survey of needs for information, preparation of a proposal of the shipping statistics required and organization of a workshop/seminar for representatives of African countries to discuss the uniform system of shipping statistics;

(e) Project activities will be carried out by ECA as the executing agency, in co-operation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Statistical Office.

Annex II

EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT OF THE SECOND WORKSHOP ON ECONOMIC  
STATISTICS OF SHIPPING, BANGKOK, 16-28 APRIL 1979

I. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7. Each delegation presented a country paper for discussion at the Workshop. The papers generally dealt with the current developments since the convening of the first workshop in July 1976, the progress made, problems encountered, plans for action to be taken in the immediate future, etc. The country papers were discussed thoroughly by the participants. Many problems and issues were solved collectively by the Workshop and useful suggestions for improvements in individual countries' plans for action were also offered by many participants.

8. Following the discussion of the country papers, all the important technical aspects of the L.2 scheme [uniform system of collecting economic statistics of shipping] were then studied and evaluated. The main topics involved were the validity of the three basic files in terms of the existing statistical environment in the ESCAP region and the development of the shipping industry in general. Other topics discussed included commodity and geographical classifications and port code, freight charges, gross weight of commodities, packaging, and type and service type of ship. The secretariat presented some technical notes, including the first draft of the "Handbook on economic statistics of shipping" and "Port code of the world" to serve as a basis for further discussion on various technical aspects of the uniform system.

9. The discussions, elaboration, evaluation and in-depth studies of the numerous subjects covered in the country papers and technical notes revealed the following:

(a) The importance of implementation of the uniform system of collecting economic statistics of shipping in the ESCAP member countries cannot be over-emphasized, not only because the results of the implementation would greatly strengthen the individual countries' knowledge of how efficiently the exports and imports of the country in question are being transported, but also because the solidarity of the developing member countries of the ESCAP region demands the implementation in each country in order to be able to safeguard the vital interest of the region in obtaining shipping services at the lowest cost;

(b) The implementation of the system among the developing ESCAP countries could promote economic and technical co-operation among themselves (ECDC/TCDC) at regional and interregional levels;

(c) The benefits of possessing the information derived from the data specified in the system far outweigh the resources needed to make the production of the data possible;

(d) Great strides have been made in implementing the system in many ESCAP member countries, while impressive progress has also been achieved in other member countries in the preparations for implementing the system;

(e) Although satisfaction may be entertained in the light of the progress made in member countries in general, far greater success in implementing the system in the ESCAP region could have been realized if:

(i) Government officials of member countries who are in a position to determine the priorities of government projects could have been made sufficiently aware of the benefits a developing country can obtain from the results of implementing the uniform system and the insignificant magnitude of resources required for the implementation;

(ii) The ESCAP secretariat could have asserted stronger leadership in the form of extending adequate technical advisory services to the member countries in need and the convening of workshops at reasonable intervals;

(f) The provision of advisory services to member countries is very important for countries that have already made good progress in the implementation of the system, and the availability of sustained advisory services is vital for those countries that are beginning to take up the task of implementation;

(g) Workshops of this kind provide an invaluable opportunity for exchanging experiences in implementing the uniform system, learning from each other the techniques used in solving difficult problems always peculiar to a given national environment, and discovering the deeper potentiality of the uniform system in serving the user as well as the provider of the shipping services. The holding of the workshop will also stimulate enthusiasm among the participants in their devotion to the successful completion of their task of producing much desired sets of shipping statistics through the implementation of the system.

10. In the light of those findings, the participants agreed that:

(a) The Governments of member countries would have to be made aware of the fact that the lack of shipping statistics such as those to be produced through the implementation of the uniform system was depriving the policy makers of an essential tool for decision making on such subjects as securing shipping services for the carriage of the country's imports and exports, development of national merchant fleets, port development, etc.;

(b) It was of the utmost importance that adequate advisory services be made readily available to all countries of the region that needed such services, particularly to those least developed countries in the ESCAP region which certainly required the advisory services for sustained periods;

(c) The convening of annual workshops was essential to assure speedy progress in the implementation of the uniform system. Particular importance

should be attached to the next workshop, which would have to deal with some burning issues such as the alignment of a consignment with shipments which constituted the consignment ..., treatment of freight charges, sources of information on packaging;

(d) It was necessary for the ESCAP secretariat to monitor regularly the progress of the implementation of the uniform system in individual member countries;

(e) The preparation and availability of a "Handbook on economic statistics of shipping" would provide the member countries with valuable reference material and would hasten the implementation of the system.

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