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CO-ORDINATION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination; report on the ninth session

SUMMARY

At its ninth session, the Working Group reviewed the provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Statistical Commission (para. 4), made suggestions on the content of the documentation (paras. 5-42), decided whether each document should be for discussion or information (paras. 43-47) and discussed the special topics that the Commission might wish to consider at its twenty-third session and beyond (paras. 48-54). The Working Group considered the use of administrative records for statistical purposes (paras. 55 and 56) and the ways to reduce further the reporting burden on countries in supplying data to international organizations (paras. 57-60). It also reviewed its own role and methods of operation (paras. 61 and 62).

* E/CN.3/1983/1.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The ninth session of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination of the Statistical Commission was held at Geneva from 29 September to 2 October 1981. The agenda, as adopted, is contained in the annex to the present report.

2. Pursuant to the decision of the Working Group at its earlier sessions, the officers of the Commission who attended served as officers of the Working Group, with Mr. J. W. Duncan (United States of America) acting as Chairman of the session. Other members present were: Ms. V. Nyitrai (Hungary), Mr. K. C. Seal (India), Mr. M. A. Korolev (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and Sir John Boreham (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

3. The following organizations were represented: The United Nations Statistical Office, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the European Economic Community (EEC), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Data for Development (DFD).

I. AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE
STATISTICAL COMMISSION

4. The Working Group endorsed the provisional agenda that had been approved by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-first session, 1/ with the addition of two sub-items. The first, sub-item 3 (c), entitled "Publication policy for statistics", was added in response to a recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination that the Economic and Social Council should request the Statistical Commission "to review and evaluate the general policy of publication of statistics which are more than three years old". 2/ The second was a new sub-item 5 (b), entitled "System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)". (The existing sub-item 5 (b) thus became sub-item 5 (c).)

1/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1981, Supplement No. 2 (E/1981/12), chap. XII.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/36/38), para. 484 (a); see also Economic and Social Council decision 1981/180.

II. DOCUMENTATION FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE
STATISTICAL COMMISSION

A. Content of Documents

5. The Working Group noted that the final drafts of documents to be discussed at the twenty-second session of the Statistical Commission had to be ready by May 1982, which therefore determined many aspects of their content. The Working Group approved the outlines of documents for each agenda item, as set out in a restricted document, with the following exceptions and comments:

Agenda item 3. Special issues

Agenda item 3 (a). Administrative records

6. This subject was highlighted by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-first session. It concerns both developed and developing countries, those which have systems in place and those which have yet to establish systems. It is a complex issue.

7. The document should concentrate on the extent to which administrative records are in use, the practical problems in their use and methods of solving those problems. It should reflect experience and problems in both developed and developing countries. The introduction should be very brief. The section on review of the current situation might best be structured in terms of data on individuals, data on activities, data on buildings, land, networks and other entities. The problems to be included should be concepts and classifications, coverage, logical and physical integration and co-ordination between the administrative information systems and the statistical system. The section on proposals and priorities for further work at the international level should include views on the future role of the United Nations Statistical Office in this field. The inclusion of a bibliography should be considered.

8. The United Nations Statistical Office should draw on materials and assistance offered by DFD and ECE and use a consultant, if necessary and if funds are available. The work of the expert group on co-ordination of administrative records and statistical surveys, to be convened by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in December 1981 at Tokyo, should also be reviewed for inclusion. Information on country experience should be obtained through a well-structured inquiry to countries. In this connexion, the United Nations Statistical Office should proceed expeditiously. All country information should be obtained by the end of December 1981; the meeting of the ESCAP expert group would provide a good opportunity to obtain some country information.

Agenda item 3 (b). Information technology

9. The Statistical Commission decided to consider this item because it recognized that the information world was changing and would affect the environment for statistics, its own work and that of the United Nations Statistical Office. The document should incorporate the views of the United Nations Statistical Office on

implications of changes for the international statistical system. Training of staff to cope with technological change should also be treated. In addition to looking ahead to technological change, it is important to promote the wider use of available technology and to identify the barriers to its wider use in statistics. This has special relevance for developing countries, which in some situations can go immediately to the new technologies without any intermediate stage. Special attention should be given to communications technology, as proposed in the outline. The implications for organizational structure in the central statistical offices and the relation to other parts of the government organization are important.

10. Chapter I (information technologies relevant to the work of statisticians) should be as short as possible, but an indicative, non-technical list is needed. A distinction between classical and new information technologies might usefully be made.

11. In chapter II-A (present level of utilization of various information technologies), the different situations of developed, less developed and developing countries should be reflected.

12. Chapter III (future possibilities for exploiting information technology in a statistical environment) is most important and should reflect not only the utilization of technology but also the statistical adjustments required in response to technology. It should in particular deal with the adjustments to international statistical work and co-ordination that the new technologies will demand. It is difficult to determine the exact content of chapter III at the present time.

13. In preparing the document, the United Nations Statistical Office should draw on the papers for and discussion at the Seminar on Statistical Data Collection and Processing Systems under New Conditions, held in Moscow in September 1981 under the auspices of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES), other work being done by CES, the meeting of the International Statistical Institute at Buenos Aires in November 1981 and work being done by international organizations, such as EEC, and OECD. Any inquiries to countries regarding their experiences should be highly structured and sent in the immediate future.

Agenda item 3 (c). Publication policy for statistics

14. This document should be a preliminary one, describing the present practices of the United Nations Statistical Office in publishing statistics and the implications of alternative policies. Based on the discussion during the twenty-second session, a more comprehensive document should be prepared for the the twenty-third session.

Agenda item 4. Industrial, transport, energy and international trade statistics

Agenda item 4 (b). Energy statistics

15. Energy statistics has been given high priority by the Statistical Commission. The report may be expanded beyond the proposed outline if more resources are made available for work in this field.

Agenda item 4 (c). International trade statistics

16. The third revision of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) will be prepared with the help of an expert group scheduled to meet at United Nations Headquarters in March 1982. The revision should take account of the work in progress on revising the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC). The revision of ISIC is not expected to be finalized in time for consideration by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-second session, but is planned to be completed in time for consideration at the twenty-third session. The status of the ISIC revision will be described in the document on international economic classifications (agenda item 7). It will be important to have a conversion key between SITC, Rev. 3, and the external trade classification of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA).

17. The Working Group confirmed the view of the Statistical Commission at its twenty-first session that the only reasonable way to accomplish harmonization between SITC and ISIC would be to make adjustments in both classifications. 3/

Agenda item 5. National accounts and balances

Agenda item 5 (a). System of National Accounts (SNA)

18. The Working Group was informed that the United Nations Statistical Office had recruited a consultant to prepare material for the document on proposals for revising SNA and that an expert group will be convened in March 1982 to review the proposals. The group will consider external transactions and other aspects of SNA. The documents for the expert group and the final report will be before the CES Working Party on National Accounts in April 1982. It was hoped that the views of the Working Party could be incorporated in the document for the Statistical Commission. An ad hoc technical group, to be convened by the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations Statistical Office to consider SNA and the balance of payments, will probably be convened late in 1982. An oral report on the meeting will be made to the Statistical Commission.

19. The Working Group recalled that the Statistical Commission had attached importance to eliminating differences among related standards, including in particular international trade recommendations as well as SNA and the balance of payments. 4/ The Working Group also recalled the view of the Commission that, given anticipated resource limitations, "it was essential that further conceptual development should be a co-operative task, shared by international organizations." 5/

3/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1981, Supplement No. 2 (E/1981/12), para. 86.

4/ Ibid., para. 50.

5/ Ibid., para. 47.

20. In chapter I (general proposals for the revision of SNA and for the organization and scheduling of the work), the requirements for developing countries should be fully taken into account. Chapter II (review of current work on clarification, updating and harmonization), should concentrate on areas in which substantial work has been done and clarifications and updating are possible. In preparing the report, the United Nations Statistical Office should take advantage of offers of assistance from OECD and the Statistical Office of the European Communities.

21. The Working Group requested that a written report on the meeting of the ad hoc technical group should be made available, in English only if necessary, as a background document for the Commission.

22. The document on the implementation of the guide-lines and the establishment of international data series in national accounts and related statistical fields should have a chapter reviewing country experiences in adopting international definitions, concepts and classifications recommended in SNA and supplementary documents. Chapter III (strategies for improved implementation of international guide-lines in national accounts) should include a discussion of country experiences in the use of national accounts statistics in policy making, including short-term forecasting.

Agenda item 5 (b). System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

23. The Working Group decided that a document concerning progress in the revision of the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) should be submitted to the commission. The United Nations Statistical Office should make arrangements with CMEA for the preparation of the document.

Agenda item 5 (c). Links between the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

24. The Working Group recalled that the Statistical Commission had felt that work on illustrative calculations was an important way of making progress in this field. ^{6/} It would be desirable to include in annex I (derivation of net material product for the United States for 1972) the derivation of net material product for at least one developing country. It was hoped that the experience of India could be included. The results of the project on SNA/MPS links carried out by France and Hungary should be included.

Agenda item 6. Price statistics

25. In relation to the document on the long-term organization of the International Comparison Project (ICP), the Working Group was informed that a discussion document had been prepared for consideration by an expert group to be convened in

^{6/} Ibid., para. 61 (b).

November 1981. The expert group will review the programme, evaluate it in relation to resources and identify potential sources of additional funding. The results of the discussions will provide the basis for the document for the Statistical Commission.

26. The importance of ICP for countries and for the United Nations system and the need for more up-to-date results were emphasized. Problems of methodology, organization, the growing role of the regional comparisons and funding were recognized. There was a need for a careful, realistic report based on the November 1981 meeting.

27. Chapter I (status of ICP at the end of 1982) should outline the methodological limitations. The status of the methodology used for ensuring comparability of priced items, especially in producer durables, should be covered. Chapter II (goals to be achieved by the end of the decade) should cover developing methodology for comparisons of non-traded goods and services. In chapter IV (required organizational arrangements and resources to carry out ICP), the various types of training to be provided in the regions should be spelt out as far as possible.

Agenda item 7. International economic classifications

28. Harmonization of economic classifications should be emphasized in the report (see paras. 16 and 17 above).

Agenda item 8. Demographic and social statistics

Agenda item 8 (c). Social indicators and links among social, demographic and related economic and environment statistics

29. The document should reflect the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on the socio-economic indicators related to monitoring and evaluating agrarian reform and rural development. The document should have two additional sections, namely, I.C. on institutional aspects and III.E on international data compilation and analysis.

Agenda item 9. Environment statistics

30. Environment statistics has been given high priority by the Statistical Commission. The work of the United Nations Statistical Office in this field is supported mainly through extrabudgetary funds from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The content of the report will depend upon the level of resources made available by UNEP during 1982. The report could include information on co-operation between Finland, Hungary and Sweden on the development of methodology in environment statistics.

Agenda item 10. Technical co-operationAgenda item 10 (a). Development of country capabilities: the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) and the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS)

31. The part of the document dealing with NHSCP will be supplemented by an oral report on the results of the Second Consultative Meeting on NHSCP, scheduled for June 1982.

32. The Working Group agreed to the following outline for the part on LSMS:

A. Nature and scope

This section should explain the objectives and rationale of LSMS in the context of related activities of the World Bank and other institutions, including the United Nations Statistical Office.

B. Research strategy

The strategy being adopted and progress to date should be reported under the following headings: 1. Conceptual work; 2. Data collection; 3. Tabulations and analyses.

C. Prospective outputs

Some indications should be given of the likely output of LSMS at various stages.

33. The report on LSMS should be approximately half of the document. The World Bank may wish to supplement it with a more extensive background document.

34. It is important that in each of the two parts of the report there is a description of the projects in terms of their joint contribution to infrastructural development and their effect on promoting co-ordination within countries.

Agenda item 10 (b). Training in statistics

35. The following issues listed in the proposed outline were considered of most concern: training activities in the context of technical co-operation among developing countries; reorientation of training courses towards the needs identified in NHSCP; the extent to which practical needs are taken into account by training institutions and the possible need to lower academic entry requirements to attain the objective; country courses as a vehicle for professional training and the extent to which certain national centres should be expanded to serve a subregion; institutions responsible for training middle-level personnel and advice and assistance rendered by regional training centres to national training centres; extension of regional training facilities to include the training of systems analysts and programmers; training of trainers as a factor in the development of national training centres; the desirability of regional training centres

undertaking research projects; drawing up guide-lines for the academic and training needs of statisticians at different levels; locating training institutions in universities; and the procedure for evaluating training programmes and following up trainees. Based on earlier discussions of the Working Group and the Statistical Commission, it was clear that most issues in the outline were important so that it was difficult to delete any. It is important that the country coverage of the report should be comprehensive. The Seminar on Statistical Data Collection and Processing Systems under New Conditions (see para. 13 above) provided papers and statements of priorities which should be considered in the preparation of the document.

Agenda item 10 (d). Technical co-operation in statistics

36. The Working Group welcomed and encouraged the continuing activity of the United Nations Statistical Office in technical co-operation in statistics. It decided that the main issues to be considered were the efficiency, effectiveness - especially over the long term - and appropriateness of technical assistance in statistics to countries. This could best be done on the basis of statements by members of the Commission evaluating the technical co-operation given by the United Nations system to their countries.

37. To ensure proper preparations, the United Nations Statistical Office should send to the central statistical offices of the developing countries which are members of the Statistical Commission a list of the technical co-operation projects undertaken in their countries, with the request that they prepare an evaluation of the assistance given. The evaluation should be presented orally during the twenty-second session.

38. The Working Group decided that the sections of the document relating to projections should be deleted.

Agenda item 11. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes

39. The report on the evaluation of co-ordination in relation to four specified issues is closely related to other agenda items. The report should clearly outline the interconnexions.

Agenda item 13. Programme objectives and planning

40. The Working Group was informed of developments relating to the proposed work programme for 1982-1983 and the medium-term plan for 1984-1989 that had taken place since the Commission's twenty-first session in January 1981.

41. One of the documents under this agenda item is a covering note on the proposed work programme of the United Nations Statistical Office for 1984-1985 and revisions to the medium-term plan for 1984-1989. The Working Group requested that the note should include a description of the steps involved in the preparation and approval of the work programme and of the medium-term plan and its revisions. It also requested a description of the changes made in the 1982-1983 work programme and the

1984-1989 medium-term plan as a result of the review process following the twenty-first session of the Commission.

42. As requested by the Commission, ^{7/} the Working Group considered the problem of adequate documentation for the consideration of priorities. The Working Group was informed that since the conference room papers containing the work programme and medium-term plan would be prepared in accordance with an over-all United Nations time schedule, they might not be available in advance of the twenty-second session of the Commission. The Working Group expressed concern that once again the Statistical Commission would be asked to express views on priorities without having access to the relevant documentation and information, including resource information, in advance of the session. The Working Group requested the United Nations Statistical Office to make available to Commission members the draft of the work programme and other relevant information, including information on resources and other background information under review in the United Nations system, in English only if necessary, at the earliest possible stage of the preparation process. The Working Group reemphasized the view of the Commission that "resource and cost structure information, at least at the programme-element level, was required". ^{8/} It noted that such information is not official but expressed the view that a request for input on priorities by the Commission should be accompanied by all available relevant documentation for such a review.

B. Documents for discussion and those for information

43. The following criteria were adopted for deciding which documents should be submitted for discussion and which for information. The documents for discussion should include those on (a) special issues; (b) issues that have not been considered by the Commission for some years; (c) items on which specific approval from the Commission is requested and (d) items in which the Statistical Commission showed special concern at the last or recent sessions. The documents submitted for information should be progress reports on various issues.

44. The Working Group accepted the proposals made in the restricted document, after modifying them by:

(a) Adding, for discussion, the document on publication policy for statistics (agenda item 3 (c));

(b) Adding, for information, the document on progress in revising the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) (agenda item 5 (b));

^{7/} Ibid., paras. 233, 241 and 247.

^{8/} Ibid., para. 230.

- (c) Changing, to documents for information, the documents on:
- (i) National experiences and emerging issues in population and housing censuses (agenda item 8 (a));
 - (ii) Training in statistics (agenda item 10 (b));
 - (iii) Statistical data processing (agenda item 10 (c)).

The Working Group decided that if a Commission member wished to discuss any document which had been submitted for information, an opportunity to do so should be provided during the session.

45. The Working Group decided that for each issue to be discussed at the twenty-second session of the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Statistical Office should indicate the relevant discussion document and any other documents having sections related to the issue. The Working Group also decided that the document on evaluation of co-ordination in four selected areas (see agenda item 11) should be considered in advance of the discussion on international trade statistics (agenda item 4 (c)), because co-ordination and harmonization of classifications should be an important aspect of the consideration of agenda item 4 (c). Careful consideration should be given to the development of the time-table for the session of the Commission.

46. The issues for discussion and the relevant documents are as follows:

3 (a). Administrative records

Discussion document: 3 (a). Use of administrative records for statistical purposes

3 (b). Information technology

Discussion document: 3 (b). Implications of new developments in information technology

Information document: 10 (c). Statistical data processing

3 (c). Publication policy on statistics

Discussion document: 3 (c). Publication policy for statistics

5 4 (a). Industrial and transport statistics

Discussion document: 5 4 (a). Draft revision of International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics (covering note and draft of a future publication)

Information document: 5 4 (a). 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics and transport statistics

/...

11. Co-ordination and integration of international statistical programmes

Discussion document: 11. Evaluation of co-ordination in four selected areas

4 (c). International trade statistics

Discussion document: 4 (c). Draft of the third revision of SITC (covering note and draft of a future publication)

Information document: 7. Harmonization of international economic classifications

4 5 (a). System of National Accounts (SNA)

Discussion Document: 4 5 (a). Proposal for revising SNA

Information documents: 4 5 (a). Implementation of guide-lines and establishment of international data series in national accounts and related statistical fields

4 5 (b). Progress in revising MPS

4 5 (c). Conceptual framework for SNA/MPS comparisons

6. Price statistics

Discussion documents: 6. Inter-agency price statistics programme

6. Long-term organization for ICP

10 (a). Development of country capabilities: the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) and Living Standards

Measurement Study (LSMS)

Discussion document: 10 (a). Report on NHSCP and LSMS

Information document: 11. Evaluation of co-ordination in four selected areas

10 (d). Technical co-operation in statistics

- Discussion document: 10 (d). Over-all report on technical co-operation in statistics
- Information documents: 10 (a). Report on NHSCP and LSMS
- 10 (b). Training in statistics
- 10 (c). Statistical data processing

13. Programme objectives and planning

- Discussion documents: 13. Future plans of the United Nations system and other international organizations
13. Proposed work programme of the United Nations Statistical Office, 1984-1985, and revisions to the medium-term plan, 1984-1989 (covering note)
13. Proposed work programme, 1984-1985 (conference room paper)
13. Proposed medium-term plan, 1984-1989, or revisions therein (conference room paper)

47. The documents to be submitted for information are as follows:

- 5
4 (a). 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics and transport statistics
- 5
4 (b). Energy statistics
- 4-5 (a). Implementation of guide-lines and establishment of international data series in national accounts and related statistical fields
- 4-5 (b). Progress in revising MPS
- 4-5 (c). Conceptual framework for SNA/MPS comparisons
7. Harmonization of international economic classifications
- 8 (a). National experiences and emerging issues in population and housing censuses

- 8 (b). Improvement of international migration statistics
- 8 (c). National and international work on social indicators
9. Environment statistics
- 10 (b). Training in statistics
- 10 (c). Statistical data processing
11. Report of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination on its ninth session
12. Statistical work of the United Nations system and other international organizations

III. SPECIAL TOPICS TO BE TAKEN UP BY THE STATISTICAL COMMISSION
DURING ITS NEXT SEVERAL SESSIONS

48. The Working Group discussed this item on the basis of lists of special topics contained in a restricted document, as well as in a document of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES/450) and an extract from the report of the Seminar on Statistical Data Collection and Processing Systems under New Conditions (see para. 13 above).

49. The Working Group agreed that there were two categories of special issues, namely, a functional, organizational category and a subject-matter category. For both, the approach to their consideration should be future-oriented and they should be looked at in terms of the desirable future role of the international statistical system.

50. In the first category, the Working Group recommended the following topics for the twenty-third session of the Statistical Commission, in 1985:

(a) Identification of users and the establishment and development of closer contact between users and producers of international statistics, including the improvement in the dissemination of international statistics;

(b) Costs of statistical systems in relation to outputs.

51. In respect of the topic referred to in paragraph 50 (a), the work done for the thirtieth plenary session of the Conference of European Statisticians in relation to the special topic entitled "Ways and methods to adapt statistics to users' needs" should be taken into account. The item should focus attention on the purposes of the outputs of the international statistical system. National experiences, including needs for and problems in using international statistics, should be surveyed. In addition, the extent to which statistical outputs are intended for the use of the producing international organization for external users

should be considered. As far as the topic referred to in paragraph 50 (b) is concerned, the work already under way in the United Nations Statistical Office on census costs will be relevant.

52. While recognizing the difficulty of planning many years in advance, the Working Group suggested the following special topics for consideration by the Statistical Commission beyond the twenty-third session:

(a) The future form of the world statistical system (i.e., international and national agencies), covering the structural characteristics and relationships, for example, information networks and data exchange, as well as the national statistical offices, their independence and role vis-à-vis producers of non-government statistics;

(b) The role of technical co-operation in advancing the world statistical system, including ways and means of promoting the implementation of international recommendations and guide-lines in countries and the provision of technical co-operation to the developing countries.

53. For the subject-matter category of special issues, the Working Group suggested social indicators and income distribution for consideration at the twenty-third session. It agreed that the items in this category should depend on the flow of work in the world statistical system, that is to say, the issues chosen should be timely and the documents should be responsive to developments by suggesting desirable directions.

54. Preparatory work on the documentation for the special issues for the twenty-third session of the Commission in 1985 should commence as soon as possible and allowance should be made for them in the work programme and medium-term plan at the first opportunity.

IV. USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES

55. Several organizations (United Nations Statistical Office, FAO, the World Bank, EEC and WHO) outlined their present work, plans and problems relating to the use of administrative records for statistical purposes in their fields.

56. The Working Group agreed that such information should provide useful inputs into the document prepared for the twenty-second session of the Statistical Commission. The Working Group felt that the role of administrative records in a situation of declining resources for national statistics was a subject which could also be pursued beyond the twenty-second session.

V. CO-ORDINATION OF STATISTICAL DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

57. The Working Group discussed this item on the basis of a restricted document entitled "Inventory of statistical data collection activities". The document was prepared by the United Nations Statistical Office, based on information provided by

the regional commissions and specialized agencies, in response to a request by the Working Group at its eighth session (see E/CN.3/536, para. 57).

58. The Working Group expressed its appreciation of the improved presentation of the report. It recognized that significant work had been done to reduce the reporting burden on countries but stated that there was continuing concern in countries about the burden. All statistical inquiries to countries should be carefully evaluated. The Working Group felt that the situation should be improved during the 1980s through the use of improved technology at the national and international levels. The attention to be paid to this matter at future sessions of the Statistical Commission and of the Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination should help to introduce improvements.

59. The Working Group requested that the inventory (see para. 57 above) be circulated to all central statistical offices as a means of informing them of all the requests made to countries. It was felt that the information should help in the co-ordination of responses at the national level and in a review of the information being requested.

60. The Working Group requested the United Nations Statistical Office to update the inventory for its tenth session and to invite other international organizations, especially OECD, EEC and CMEA, to contribute thereto.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

61. The Working Group discussed its basic functions and methods of operation. It decided that the work of its tenth session should be directed towards reporting to the Statistical Commission on (a) its evaluation of the documentation discussed at the twenty-second session of the Commission, in 1983; (b) the status of the ongoing programmes of the United Nations Statistical Office, the regional commissions and the specialized agencies, especially in terms of the elements not discussed in depth by the Commission; (c) those long-term issues which should be discussed by the Commission and which need a long preparatory period; (d) the documentation and agenda for the twenty-third session of the Commission, in 1985, and (e) co-ordination of the statistical data collection activities of international organizations.

62. The Working Group requested that a brief focal outline be circulated in advance of the session, covering the issues to be considered, the proposed role and function of the Working Group in relation to the issues and an indication of what is expected of the Working Group. The Working Group also requested that a short digest be prepared concerning the ongoing programmes of the United Nations Statistical Office, the regional commissions and the specialized agencies as a basis for considering the status of the programmes.

VII. DATES AND PLACE OF THE TENTH SESSION

63. The Working Group recommended that its tenth session should be held at Geneva in September 1983.

ANNEX

Agenda for the ninth session

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
3. Provisional agenda for the twenty-second session of the Statistical Commission
4. Documentation for the twenty-second session of the Statistical Commission
5. Special topics to be taken up by the Statistical Commission during its next several sessions
6. Use of administrative records for statistical purposes
7. Co-ordination of the statistical data-collection activities of international organizations
8. Other business
9. Dates and place of the tenth session
10. Adoption of the report of the Working Group to the Statistical Commission
