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PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1992-1997

Preliminary proposals for the medium-term plan in statistics
for 1992-1997

Note by the Secretary-General

CHAPTER 26. STATISTICS

GENERAL ORIENTATION

1. The statistical programme of the United Nations was established by the Economic and Social Council at its first session as a permanent and continuous function of the Secretariat. It provides a wide range of statistical services and outputs to users and producers of statistics in Member States, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, the regional commissions and other organs of the United Nations as well as other international and regional organizations.

2. The overall goal of the statistics programme is to increase the availability and use of relevant, timely and reliable statistics for national and international planning and action. In pursuit of this continuing and evolving goal, the statistics programme contributes to the development, expansion, improvement and maintenance of cost-effective statistical capabilities through the formulation and improvement of statistical methodology, through the application of new technologies, through the collection and dissemination of statistics in numerous fields, through the provision of support for technical co-operation and through the promotion of co-ordination of international statistical work.

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3. The methodological work includes the development of recommendations, guidelines, classifications, manuals and technical reports dealing with the collection, compilation, processing, presentation and use of statistical data and the organization of national statistical services and operations. Such work contributes both to the improvement of statistics and statistical capabilities in Member States, particularly developing countries, and to the international comparability of statistics. The technical co-operation activities in support of developing countries are integrated into the overall functioning of the Statistical Office. Those activities draw on the regular work of the Office, for example, by using and promoting the use in countries of the methodological work of the Office, and they contribute to the development of methodology by providing feedback on the special statistical needs and problems of the developing countries and the applicability in countries of the methodologies. National statistics relevant to most sectors of economic and social activity are published for most countries and areas of the world and disseminated to Governments and a wide range of other users. By putting its own data into an international context, each country can obtain perspectives that cannot be obtained in any other way.

4. In recent years, broader and more integrated approaches to development planning and policy formulation have been widely adopted at both the national and international levels. This has increased the demand for greater integration of economic, social, demographic and environmental statistics to meet planning and policy needs. The amount and detail of statistical data available at the international level have grown rapidly. Technology for storing, processing, communicating and disseminating data is continuing to change. An appropriate blending of these technologies is needed to ensure that the required statistics are made available to a wide range of users in ways that suit the wide range of uses made of the statistics. This will involve choosing appropriate forms of technology for dissemination to suit user needs. Comprehensive data on economic and social structure and change are still seriously lacking in many countries. Knowledge of the reliability of available data is lacking in many fields and for many countries. There are serious time-lags in the availability of data. All these factors need to be addressed to improve the usability and availability of data for policy and decision-making purposes at the national and international levels. International statistical work is carried out by a large number of national and international organizations. Each organization has its own objectives, priorities and methods but also shares a number of common concerns. Efficient and effective use of the resources of these organizations requires cohesive, integrated and co-ordinated international efforts for the benefit of users and producers of statistics in Member States and in international and regional organizations.

5. The proposed plan for 1992-1997 has been prepared taking account of previous and current plans, decisions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Statistical Commission, and programmes of action adopted by world conferences and in connection with special decades or years on issues of international concern in the economic and social fields. Recent legislative authority has further defined the orientation and the emphasis of the statistics programme within the overall established framework. In recent years specific requirements have led to the inclusion of such topics as crime and criminal justice, environment, human settlements, population, women and special population groups, including children, youth, the aging and disabled persons.

6. Within the framework set out above, during the period 1992-1997 the statistics programme will have the following important aspects:

(a) Development of concepts and methods, with efforts especially directed towards the completion of and follow up to the ongoing review of the United Nations System of National Accounts (SNA), including related work on linking SNA with other statistical systems and frameworks; continued review of the adequacy of existing international economic statistical classifications and work on their further harmonization; development of methodology in relation to statistics and indicators on special population groups; and the development of methods, concepts and classifications for use in such newer fields as environment statistics and service statistics. This work on concepts and methods will be undertaken with full recognition of the interrelation of the fields of statistics for which the Statistical Office is responsible and their interrelatedness with other fields of statistics as well. In addition, special efforts will be made to provide national statistical offices, particularly those in developing countries, with up-to-date information on national experiences and practices in newer fields of statistics and with current statistical policies, methods and techniques used in the collection, compilation, processing, evaluation and dissemination of statistics. At the same time it is anticipated that as a result of statistical development, the statistical services of developing countries will be in a position to increase their contributions to international work on statistical methodology.

(b) Improvement of statistical operations and application of advanced computer and related techniques geared towards improved storage, organization, access, processing and dissemination of statistics. Special attention will be given to the utilization of microcomputers, improved compatibility and flexibility of data bases in various fields and review of the most appropriate means of disseminating the full range of statistical data, making the best use of possibilities offered by the various media, including publications, computer tapes, diskettes, and microfiches. In particular, the possible changes in the contents of printed publications consequent to the use of diskettes, microfiches and tapes and the new and rapidly evolving optical-disk technologies for dissemination will be addressed.

(c) Support for technical co-operation activities with special emphasis on economic statistics, including international trade and national accounts statistics, the strengthening of household survey and population and housing census capabilities, statistical data-processing capabilities, statistical training and the organization and management of national statistical services.

(d) Collection, processing and publication of statistics with particular attention to building up the extended time series and basic data essential for analysis of long-term economic and social change at the country, regional and global levels and also to providing indications of the reliability of statistical data. The Statistical Office serves a wide range of users and the outputs have many applications; a major aim will be to use available processing, communications and dissemination technologies to serve the diverse users and purposes effectively and efficiently. Better communication with users will be required to understand more fully their needs in terms of contents and in terms of the forms in which data can best be made available.

(e) Co-ordination of the international statistical system with continued efforts towards conceptual consistency and technical integration. A special relationship exists between the Statistical Office and the statistical divisions of the regional commissions. They work closely together on all aspects of their programmes in full recognition of the complementary and interdependent nature of their work. In this division of labour the regional commissions ensure that particular regional considerations are taken into account in the development of global standards and classifications. At the same time the regional commissions are able, when needed, to develop regional variants of these global standards and classifications. The regional commissions assist in collecting and processing country data, and a well-established framework exists for the exchange of country replies to questionnaires and of computer tapes, thereby ensuring that all statistics are available throughout the United Nations. The close relationship that exists between the Statistical Office and the statistical services of the specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations will continue to be emphasized and promoted. In addition, emphasis will also be placed on establishing closer links with the work of related non-governmental organizations in areas of common concern.

7. Areas where efforts will be curtailed between 1992 and 1997 as compared with the 1984-1991 period include the following: (a) work in general price statistics previously was aimed at developing and promoting a unified methodology for price statistics and a central facility for maintaining price data accessible to all international agencies; (b) work in income distribution statistics is expected to be limited to monitoring data developments and compiling data from individual countries regarding household income and expenditure statistics; (c) planned work will be suspended on one aspect of co-ordination: the previously planned overall review of statistical publications of the United Nations system is no longer contemplated, but within each subject area the question of the consistency and compatibility of the various international publications will be given attention; and (d) work on the collection and dissemination of construction statistics, human settlements statistics and shipping statistics will be reduced because of staff reductions unless new sources of funding can be found for this work.

PROGRAMME. STATISTICS

SUBPROGRAMME 1. DEVELOPING STATISTICAL CONCEPTS AND METHODS FOR USE BY MEMBER STATES

(a) Objectives

8. The objectives of this subprogramme are:

- (i) Intergovernmental objective: to encourage the use of sound concepts and methods for national and international statistics and to improve the relevance, quality and comparability of statistics for national and international purposes;

- (ii) General objective of the Secretariat: to develop and disseminate sound concepts, definitions, classifications and methods of data collection, compilation and dissemination for national and international statistics; to promote the improvement of national and international statistics, particularly their reliability, timeliness, scope, coverage and comparability; and to promote the further harmonization and integration of national and international statistics.

(b) Strategy for the period 1992-1997

(i) The situation at the end of 1991

9. The revised System of National Accounts (SNA) will have been finalized to take into account the Statistical Commission's comments at its twenty-sixth session. Handbooks will be available in preliminary or final form, including those on accounting for production, public sector accounts, household sector accounts, enterprise accounts, input-output tables, use of microcomputers for national accounts compilation, environment accounts and national accounting at constant prices. Also, as a part of the SNA revision, links will have been more clearly defined between its concepts and data and those of the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS), the European System of Accounts (ESA) and various other statistics that are internationally standardized (balance of payments, government finance statistics, industrial statistics, etc.).

10. The third revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, (ISIC, Rev.3) will have been published and the Indexes to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities for that revision will be in an advanced stage of completion. The Central Product Classification (CPC) will have been published. Correlation tables between ISIC, Rev. 3, CPC, third revision of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC, Rev.3) and the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System of the Customs Co-operation Council will have been developed and published. Other international classifications will need revision, particularly the Classification of the Functions of Government in view of its use in the revised SNA. Indexes to SITC, Rev. 3, will also have been published.

11. Preparations relating to the 1990 Population and Housing Census Programme will have been completed, including handbooks and training materials. Further, taking advantage of low-cost advances in computer technology, technical reports will have been published on methods of use of microcomputers and relevant software packages for census data processing and for the development of national population census data bases.

12. International data bases on microcomputer diskettes and printed compendiums will have been developed and issued with supporting technical documentation for statistics and indicators on women and on disabled persons. Technical reports will be available to assist countries in developing national data bases on women and on disabled persons. To assist interested countries in developing national accounts and related economic statistics to measure women's contribution to development and the role of the informal sector, research and technical reports will have been

completed in conjunction with national and regional training programmes. An experimental compilation of those statistics at the international level will have been prepared.

13. Other methodological work will have been completed. Reports and publications will have been issued on energy statistics, national accounts at constant prices, environment statistics, a statistical programme for household and small-scale industries and the effectiveness of the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics.

(ii) The period 1992-1997

14. Work on national accounts will focus on the completion and follow-up of the SNA revision process. The revised SNA will be published and widely disseminated. The emphasis will be on promoting, through the further development of the national accounts compilation methodology based on the use of microcomputers and on further elaboration of SNA, handbooks to assist national accountants in areas not covered until now. Cost- and time-saving strategies, such as bench-mark vs. current accounting or short-cut estimation methods, will be developed to help countries improve the timely availability of national accounts statistics. Also adaptation of national accounts to a variety of uses will be further developed.

15. The reoriented approach to work on SNA/MPS links will continue. Emphasis will be placed on the parallel use of the two systems as alternative forms of analysis, both based on national accounting principles. This work will also include further development, testing and dissemination of improved methods, including the development of software for making links between the two types of analysis. In fostering linkages between SNA and the systems and frameworks in specialized fields of statistics, work will continue on conceptual issues and on the development of handbooks and guidelines for national work on linkage.

16. In the area of economic classifications, work will be completed on the provisional version of the Central Product Classification and the third revision of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, including the development of numeric indexes for those classifications. Further reviews of classifications will be carried out and, when warranted, revisions will be initiated, particularly to take into account changes arising from the adoption of the new SNA or important new statistical needs. A review of the adequacy of the provisional version of the Central Product Classification will be undertaken, and a revised draft will be prepared if the Statistical Commission considers it necessary. Special-purpose classifications in selected fields will be developed. Improved harmonization with classifications developed for use by regional intergovernmental bodies, such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and the European Communities will be promoted. Under the guidance of the Statistical Commission, the Statistical Office will continue to promote the co-ordination of work on classifications and will be the focal point for the provision of information and guidance to Member States and international organizations in the implementation of these classifications and their further development for international and national use and adaptation. Software versions of classification indexes and conversion tables will be disseminated, drawing on national and international work in this area supplemented, if necessary, by developmental work.

17. In the fields of social, demographic and human settlements statistics, priority will be given to (a) providing guidance to countries on census data base development and timely dissemination and use of data, (b) studying national experience and issues emerging from 1990 round of population and housing censuses and (c) initiating preparations for the next Population and Housing Census Programme, including review of existing recommendations and development of additional recommendations as needed. Priority will also be given to the development of methodologies for statistics, indicators and user-oriented data bases on women and special population groups, including youth, children, elderly and disabled. Technical reports will be prepared on specialized topics as specific needs are identified, such as migration and special population groups, and in response to user requests.

18. Where possible, the concepts and definitions established for industrial statistics will be linked to the framework of the revised SNA/MPS. Work will continue on the statistical treatment of small-scale industrial activity for inclusion in the International Recommendations for the 1993 World Programme of Industrial Statistics. Revised recommendations for construction statistics will focus on national and international needs and national practices, as well as on relationships to the national accounts. In service statistics, the main emphasis will be put on (a) further developing the methodology of the quantity and price indexes for services with a view to improving constant price estimates; (b) further elaborating the concepts, definitions, classifications and data collection methods in trade-in-services statistics; (c) developing commodity and activity classifications in services; (d) elaborating comprehensive guidelines for such areas as financial services, insurance and other business services; and (e) disseminating as widely as possible important methodological developments in this rapidly evolving field.

19. As part of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP), a number of studies will be undertaken to assist countries in planning and implementing integrated programmes of household surveys. This series of publications will review issues and procedures in specific areas of household survey methodology and operations and in selected subject areas.

20. The Guidelines on Principles of a System of Price and Quantity Statistics will be revised, taking into account the experiences obtained in the work on consumer price indexes, producer price indexes and external trade indexes. Guidelines on international comparisons will be prepared, incorporating experience gained to date through the International Comparison Programme, especially from the regionalization of the programme and from product (value-added) intercountry comparisons.

21. Work in energy statistics will focus on any necessary refinements and further development of methodologies for general energy statistics and new and renewable sources of energy. In the area of international trade, research will focus on country practices in merchandise trade statistics and any needed revisions to international recommendations in this field. Also the development of concepts, definitions and guidelines for international trade in services will be pursued with a view to promoting nationally useful and internationally comparable data. Experience gained in countries in work on various aspects of environment statistics

and from regional seminars and technical co-operation in environment statistics will provide information for further modification and revision of technical reports on concepts and methods of environment statistics and the start of further in-depth methodological work in selected areas of high priority.

SUBPROGRAMME 2. APPLYING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IN COLLECTING,
PROCESSING AND DISSEMINATING STATISTICS

(a) Objectives

22. The objectives of this subprogramme are:

- (i) Intergovernmental objective: to promote the use of advanced technology in compiling and disseminating national and international statistics;
- (ii) General objective of the Secretariat: (a) to disseminate statistics at the international level efficiently and effectively through the recurrent issue of compendiums of economic, demographic and social statistics; (b) to disseminate international statistics through media other than recurrent publications to meet a variety of users' needs and to respond to ad hoc requests for statistical information; and (c) to apply advanced technology in collecting, compiling, processing and disseminating international statistics, providing more efficient means of production and storage of statistics and access to statistical data bases.

(b) Strategy for the period 1992-1997

(i) The situation at the end of 1991

23. A review of recurrent statistical publications to streamline and improve their presentation will result in a substantial number of modifications. However, because of the constantly increasing quantity and complexity of statistics received, and the continuing mandated reductions in staff resources, timeliness will remain a challenge and some publications will have been discontinued or issued less frequently, in spite of continuing and new demands for statistical information. Most of the statistical data will be available in machine-readable form but largely limited to magnetic tapes. Data will be provided in response to ad hoc requests primarily by means of machine-readable tapes and hard-copy tables. On an experimental basis data will be disseminated on diskettes for microcomputers, either routinely or in response to ad hoc requests. Statistical data bases of the Statistical Office will be available on-line, mainly to internal users. A few of the data bases, including the new United Nations system data base of core international series, may be accessed directly by external users.

(ii) The period 1992-1997

24. Improved data-processing techniques and advanced photocomposition technology will be used to improve the timeliness and contents of the regular general compendiums of statistics, including the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly

Bulletin of Statistics and other recurrent publications in subprogramme 3. It is anticipated that the Statistical Yearbook and the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics will be substantially revised to ensure their continued relevance to users.

25. To compile, organize and disseminate statistics to meet the wide variety of users' needs served by statistical data produced by the Statistical Office, a wide range of new and improved technologies will be explored. Application of laser-printing technology will be expanded to produce appropriate publications at a reduced cost. The possibility will be explored of using advanced technology for recording a large volume of data, such as optical disk technology, to make a whole volume of a publication or one or more detailed data bases available on a single disk so that data can be efficiently retrieved on microcomputers. Taking advantage of the availability of the low-cost, easy-to-use software packages for data storage, retrieval and manipulation, a wide range of statistics will be disseminated on diskettes. Technologies now being used (for example, microfiche) will be reviewed to determine their continuing applicability.

26. Provision will be made for the introduction of an ad hoc series of statistical publications, which would permit the publication of additional useful sets of statistical data that are assembled by the Office on a variety of subjects but do not readily fit into the structure of the ongoing set of publications. This series can be introduced over the next few years using low cost printing and preparation technology.

27. To improve data collection from countries, the use, where possible, of magnetic tapes and the introduction of diskettes will be encouraged as media for reporting data. Data exchange with other international and regional statistical agencies will be improved through the increasing use of on-line access to data bases. Efforts will be made to standardize data exchange formats.

28. The processing and storage of collected data will be improved by applying advanced programming techniques, data-base management and data access methodology appropriate to the different types of statistics. The scope and techniques of on-line access to the statistical data bases will be improved.

29. Manuals on statistical data processing for use in countries, taking special account of the processing problems of developing countries, will be updated, reflecting the latest developments and disseminated.

SUBPROGRAMME 3. COLLECTING, COMPILING AND DISSEMINATING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS

(a) Objectives

30. The objectives of this subprogramme are:

(i) Intergovernmental objective: to promote sound national and international policy formulation and decision-making by fostering the widespread availability and use of relevant, comprehensive, timely, reliable and comparable international statistics;

(ii) General objective of the Secretariat: to collect, compile, evaluate and disseminate relevant, comprehensive, reliable, and timely national accounts, industry, services (including international trade in services), energy, international trade, transport, prices (including comprehensive and comparable data on purchasing-power parities and real product for all countries), demographic, social and environment statistics and indicators that are as comparable as possible, in order to serve the needs of a wide range of national and international users.

(b) Strategy for the period 1992-1997

(i) The situation at the end of 1991

31. Recurrent statistical publications on national accounts, industry, energy, international trade, transport, social and demographic statistics and indicators will have been issued along with a number of non-recurrent special statistical publications on such subjects as industrial statistics and special population groups.

32. The data bases for the majority of recurrent and special publications will have been completely or nearly completely automated to respond in a timely and cost-effective manner to ad hoc specialized requests, to provide flexible access and tabulation capabilities for specialized inquiries and studies, to pool information more effectively in the international statistical services and to respond to new statistical requirements established by intergovernmental bodies.

33. In some fields the use of microcomputers will have made it possible to start distributing both compiled data and questionnaires on diskette.

34. Official national accounts, demographic and other data will have become available for a larger number of countries as a result of efforts involving methodological development (see subprogramme 1) and improved national capabilities acquired through technical co-operation (see subprogramme 5). Improvements in developing various regional and world aggregates will have been achieved by making estimates (mainly through computerized methods) for some missing national data. A limited number of studies of specialized national accounts subsets will have been initiated for selected countries; they will include such items as government accounts, household sector accounts, input-output tables and institutional sector accounts and serve as bench-marks for international analysis.

35. Data availability in countries will have been reviewed, with a view to expanding the series covered in industrial statistics in response to user needs. The results of the 1983 World Programme of Industrial Statistics will have been processed and analysed.

36. An increasing number of users will have on-line access to the COMTRADE data bank. International trade statistics, compiled on the basis of SITC, Rev.3, will be available for some countries.

37. The energy statistics data base will have expanded to include for an increasing number of countries statistics on new and renewable sources of energy and selected data on environmental impacts of energy production, conversion, consumption, and information on prices and costs. To present energy data more adequately, the energy balance format will be complemented by satellite matrices and flow diagrams.

38. A study will have been published in the methods used in compiling the United Nations price indexes for external trade. The fifth phase of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) will be completed, the preparatory arrangements for phase VI (with 1990 as reference year) will have been made, and some of the field-work will have begun.

39. An international data base on microcomputer diskettes for demographic and social statistics will have been developed, and a new issue of the compendium of social statistics and indicators prepared from it. Statistics will have been collected from countries for a household and family statistics data base. The first compendium of statistics and indicators on the situation of women will have been issued. The first two issues of a new publication series on social trends will have been completed in co-operation with UNICEF and UNFPA. An assessment of data sources and availability of environment statistics will have been substantially completed.

(ii) The period 1992-1997

40. The recurrent statistical publications and some non-recurrent statistical publications responding to current mandates will continue to be issued. Their structure and content will continue to be reviewed in the light of the increased capacity of certain types of users to make use of data disseminated in machine-readable form. In this connection, the general developments outlined in subprogramme 2 will be examined in the light of the particular needs in each subject-matter field. It is anticipated that the coverage, timeliness, reliability and comparability of official statistics provided by Member States will continue to improve in such fields as national accounts, international trade, industrial statistics, energy statistics and demographic and social statistics as a result of the wider use of improved statistical methods promoted under subprogramme 1 and improved national capabilities of countries under subprogramme 5 on technical co-operation.

41. In national accounts the potential expansion of work will particularly include additional data on institutional sector accounts, financial flows and balance sheets as a consequence of the reorientation of national accounts development emphasizing integrated sectoral analysis instead of the traditional production accounts approach. Reoriented country data files, which include all official and estimated national accounts information for the national economy and for all institutional sectors, will be established for a large number of countries. Therefore, expanded series of integrated national accounts statistics covering government data, external transaction information and financial information will be available for international analysis. Attempts will also be made to promote co-ordination among international organizations regarding methods of estimation

where national accounts statistics are not immediately available (see subprogramme 1). Country practices in compiling national accounts statistics will be analysed and evaluated to assess data reliability and conformity with international guidelines, in particular for the institutional sector accounts, and this information will be provided to users of national accounts data.

42. An increasing number of countries will be regularly conducting industrial censuses and surveys. The results of these inquiries will be made available to a broad range of users. Countries will be offered assistance in their transition to the revised version of ISIC in the reporting of all industrial data; improvements in the coverage of inquiries and the quality and timeliness of data will be emphasized.

43. The coverage of industrial commodity statistics will be modified (and expanded where feasible) to respond to structural changes in industry and to reflect new directions in industrial technology. Similarly, work on non-energy minerals will be expanded to take into account the increasing global demand for raw materials and the need for information on a number of variables such as foreign trade, consumption, reserves and prices.

44. National and international developments and publications concerning industrial statistics and service statistics, including international trade in services and price and quantity indicators, will be monitored. With the expansion of national and international work in this area, consideration will be given to the publication of international statistics on services.

45. Annual international trade publications, incorporating where possible international seaborne trade, will continue to be issued regularly. It is expected that developments in the collection and processing of international trade data on services will bring about greater international comparability and that national data will be available from a great majority of countries. In collaboration with the European Communities and their member States, the special challenges posed by the single market for international trade statistics will be addressed. The international trade statistics computerized data base (COMTRADE) will be maintained as an essential service to users. Alternative forms of dissemination will be explored (see subprogramme 2).

46. The possibility exists that energy and energy-related statistics may acquire a degree of importance in international and national economic affairs in the 1990s similar to that acquired in the 1970s and early 1980s. Efforts will be made to be responsive to this situation if it develops. To respond to users' requests, the core data base on energy statistics will be further refined through seasonal and regional disaggregation of energy supply and demand and will be complemented by information on special energy-related topics of immediate relevance to energy and development planners. Data collection will draw on a greater range of primary and secondary official sources and will be increasingly interconnected with activities of specialized agencies (e.g., FAO, WMO), and, where feasible, regional commissions. Increased use will be made of existing mechanisms such as the decennial world programmes in industrial statistics and the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP). In addition, energy and energy-related data

will be increasingly incorporated in software packages for data evaluation, review and analysis and general development planning.

47. Phase VI of the International Comparison Programme (ICP) will be carried out, using 1990 as a reference year, on a regional basis, and the Statistical Office will continue to be responsible for the co-ordination of the project and for any interregional (core) comparisons undertaken. It is planned to prepare and issue in the first half of the planning period an ICP handbook, containing both a theoretical description of the comparison method and practical instructions for the participating countries. Preparatory work for product-side (value added) comparisons will be initiated, and a first multilateral comparison is expected to be finalized by 1995.

48. The social statistics data bases will also be further developed using new technologies to incorporate the full range of social statistics available in the United Nations system and, where feasible, human settlements statistics. New technologies are particularly relevant to achieving improvements in collection, co-ordination and integration, access and dissemination of statistics and indicators collected for the compendiums of social statistics and indicators. These data bases will be maintained on a continuous basis for ad hoc dissemination as well as for the quinquennial preparation of the compendiums. Small-scale automated data bases will be maintained, using microcomputer and related technologies and based on the primary data bases of the Statistical Office and other United Nations sources, in specialized fields of specific user interest, such as women, homeless, elderly and disabled persons, other special population groups, households and families, and crime and criminal justice. These will be used to generate special compilations of statistics and indicators in response to specific user demands and to meet a wide variety of ad hoc requests effectively and efficiently on a continuous basis.

49. An international programme of collection and dissemination of environment statistics will be initiated by the Statistical Office in co-operation with the regional commissions. Once a sufficient number of countries have established environment statistics programmes, international data collection will be gradually expanded in line with improved data availability in both national statistical offices and international organizations.

SUBPROGRAMME 4. CO-ORDINATING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL PROGRAMMES

(a) Objectives

50. The objectives of this subprogramme are:

- (i) Intergovernmental objective: to make it easier for Member States to use the international statistical recommendations and classifications of different international organizations; to reduce the statistical reporting burden on Member States; and to achieve an integrated system in the collection, processing and dissemination of international statistics;

(ii) General objective of the Secretariat: to promote co-ordination of the international statistical system, including co-ordination of technical co-operation activities; to provide statistical services to intergovernmental bodies, units within the Secretariat and other United Nations bodies; and to serve as a focal point for the international statistical system.

(b) Strategy for the period 1992-1997

(i) The situation at the end of 1991

51. By the end of 1991, documents will have been prepared and meetings serviced for the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Statistical Commission, the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions of the Statistical Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination and the twenty-third through twenty-fifth sessions of the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities. Implementation of the decisions taken at those meetings will have been completed or will be under way. Consultations will have been held with the statistical services of the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations in order to promote the appropriate levels and forms of co-ordination in work planned for the 1990s. A similar review will have taken place with interested non-governmental organizations. Statistical services will have been provided to the Committee on Contributions and in response to ad hoc requests from other United Nations bodies. Substantive services and statistical expertise will also have been provided to the Department for Disarmament Affairs for the establishment of a data base to analyse military expenditures within the national accounts framework.

(ii) The period 1992-1997

52. Substantive servicing of the Statistical Commission, its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Co-ordination and the ACC Sub-Committee on Statistical Activities will continue.

53. To promote overall statistical co-ordination, close working relations will be maintained with the regional commissions, specialized agencies, other intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and national statistical services on such matters as questionnaires, data banks, data exchange and concepts, definitions and classifications. Co-ordination instruments such as the Directory of International Statistics and the inventory of data collection activities issued by international organizations will be prepared in a computerized format to permit continued updating and ease of access.

54. The provision of statistical services to organs of the General Assembly and other bodies on request, including the provision of data on national income, exchange rates, population, etc. to the Committee on Contributions, and the provision of substantive services and statistical expertise to various other United Nations bodies or units of the Secretariat are continuing activities.

SUBPROGRAMME 5. SUPPORT FOR TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION IN STATISTICS
AND STATISTICAL DATA PROCESSING (DEPARTMENT OF
TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT)

(a) Objectives

55. The objectives of this subprogramme are:

- (i) Intergovernmental objective: to develop the statistics and statistical capabilities that developing countries need to plan, monitor and direct their economic and social development;
- (ii) General objective of the Secretariat: to assist developing countries in developing their statistical capabilities, including their capability to apply modern computer technology for processing statistical data, through the provision of direct advisory services, fellowships, supplies, equipment, statistical training, methodological material and guidelines and through substantive support and monitoring of technical co-operation programmes and projects.

(b) Strategy for the period 1992-1997

(i) The situation at the end of 1991

56. By the end of 1991, it is expected that the capabilities and outputs of the statistical services of many developing countries will have continued to improve. Yet a number of developing countries will still be unable to provide the data required by national decision makers and other users in terms of scope, detail, reliability or timeliness. Some 90 developing countries will be participating in technical co-operation programmes in statistics, and 40-45 countries are expected to participate in the National Household Survey Capability Programme, many of the latter having reached the maintenance phase. Collaborative approaches will have been established between the National Household Survey Capability Programme and such regional or specialized survey programmes as the Pan Arab Project for Child and National Health Survey (PAPCHILD) in member countries of the League of Arab States and the World Bank's Social Dimensions of Adjustment programme in Africa.

57. Many projects are expected to have strong data-processing components, in part because of the number of countries participating in the 1990 World Population and Housing Census Programme. These components involve training national data-processing staff and installing and developing of data-processing equipment and software. Guidelines, recommendations, manuals and technical reports in various fields of statistics developed under subprogramme 1 will have been used in a variety of statistical training activities and by the national and international staff of many technical co-operation projects.

(ii) The period 1992-1997

58. The strategy will draw on the various related elements of the statistics programme and on the total know-how and experience available in the Statistical

Office and the regional commissions. To assist developing countries in improving their statistical capacity and capability, advisory services will be provided and international experts will be posted on a long-term basis, and consultants, on a short-term basis, to transfer knowledge and experience in specific fields to local professionals in particular countries. Other forms of training will also be stressed. Another aim will be to help improve the stature and capabilities of national statistical offices by directing the attention of planners and policy makers to useful applications of statistics in developing effective socio-economic programmes and reaching policy decisions. Emphasis will be placed on the continuing evaluation of individual country projects to determine their effectiveness and whether their objectives have been achieved. In this exercise exchange of information and experience with other international and regional organizations will be stressed. The national statistical services of developing countries will be encouraged to play a greater role in co-ordinating technical co-operation received in statistics, and international and regional organizations will be encouraged to continue their interim arrangements for co-ordination.

59. Projects will also provide such necessary equipment as computer hardware and appropriate software programmes to enable the countries to process their data as near as possible to the period to which they refer and to facilitate use of the data.

60. An increase in the number of country projects in various fields is expected during the plan period, particularly projects related to statistical organization in general, population, social and demographic statistics, national accounts statistics and economic statistics, including international trade, industrial, energy and related statistics. There will be some activities connected with the conclusion of the 1990 round of population censuses, primarily census data processing, data base construction, census evaluation and other post-enumeration activities.

61. Countries will be assisted in implementing national household survey programmes aimed at obtaining integrated statistics on a regular basis on a wide range of social and socio-economic topics and at developing national instruments and skills for survey-taking. The Central Co-ordinating Unit of NHSCP will be gradually integrated into the ongoing technical co-operation programme in statistics.

62. In connection with the transfer of technical expertise, statistical classifications adapted to the needs of individual developing countries will be developed along with related instructional materials. It is also expected that transfer of knowledge from one developing country to another developing country (technical co-operation among developing countries) will be encouraged in a number of statistical fields and in data processing.